

# VOICES OF OUR LAND —

## ETHNIC RADIO AND THE COMPLEXITY OF DIASPORIC PRACTICES IN MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

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Media provide one of the main public forums in which diasporic communities may develop relationships with their countries of origin while constructing their locality and presence in their new place. This paper will focus on two separate local Latin American radio programs in Adelaide, Australia. The two programs illustrate the inherent tension that exists between the Australian multicultural imagery of the 'ethnic-migrant community' as a homogenised cultural enclave, and the complex diasporic experiences of such groups and 'identities'.

Australian ethnic radio programs are central to the multicultural imagery and are currently also one of the main sites where the migratory locality and the relations to the homeland are performed and negotiated by migrant and other minority groups. The radio programs discussed in this paper operated from within a similar institutional setting where they were defined as 'ethnic community radio programs'. This label helped to present the 'community' as a social entity which the programs were merely representing. However, a close look at the contents, performances and the actual making of the programs reveals

contested views of the 'community' and alternative interpretations of the 'homeland', the 'locality' and the migratory experience. Despite their differences and their struggle against each other, the two programs provided their makers and their audiences with ways of interpreting the migratory movement and life in the new locality.

### ETHNIC RADIO, MULTICULTURALISM AND THE 'ETHNIC COMMUNITY'

Radio was one of the first public spheres to be transformed by the new policy of multiculturalism. The first non-English radio programs in Australia began on commercial radio as early as 1948, in response to the post-war migration. Known as LOTE, or programs in 'languages other than English', these programs were mainly designed to provide emergency information for migrants who could not speak English. At the time, and to a certain degree until the emergence of 'ethnic radio' in the mid 1970s, non-English radio programs were seen as potentially dangerous; radio, like other aspects of migrant lives, had to be closely controlled and monitored by the state.

... the government still adhered to its policy of assimilating migrants expeditiously into the general Australian population and was also fearful that politically subversive material might go undetected if broadcast in languages unknown to the authorities during the height of the Cold War. Therefore regulations were introduced in 1952, restricting these programs to the spoken word accompanied by an English translation and limited to 2.5% of a station's programming.<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with the assimilation policy, the airwaves, like any other public space, had to be Anglo.<sup>2</sup> It was not until 1973 that Al Grassby, the new Labor Minister for Immigration, began promoting multiculturalism and cultural plurality as an official governmental policy and lifted the broadcasting restrictions. This is what later (in 1975) led to the development of government funded ethnic broadcasting.

The establishment of government controlled 'ethnic radio' emerged alongside the creation of various 'access' community radio stations that had developed a large ethnic component, eventually broadcasting in thirty-six languages.<sup>3</sup> This important transformation during the 1970s was largely based upon complex electoral and political processes. Such processes included the Labor party's resolution to regain power by targeting the 'ethnic vote' and a political decision to publicise the benefits of Medibank to NESB communities via radio.<sup>4</sup> Due to the previous strict state control of the media, public ethnic broadcasting was almost immediately presented as a symbol and official acknowledgment of the presence of 'ethnics' living in Australia.<sup>5</sup>

At a governmental level, from its inception, broadcasting in what was called 'community languages' was seen as the best method of familiarising immigrants with the social, economic and political workings of Australian society.<sup>6</sup> 'Ethnic media', mainly in the form of radio programs, became not only an exemplary model of multiculturalism, but also one of the main public sites where migrants were 'allowed' to maintain and express their original cultural identities.

Currently ethnic media operate at two main levels. The first level is the national governmental radio and television channel known as the 'Special Broadcasting Service' — or SBS.<sup>7</sup> The second level, which is the concern of this paper, is the media sector that takes the form of various local Ethnic Radio Stations, Community Television and access 'ethnic radio programs' within various non-ethnic Community Radio Stations.<sup>8</sup>

At both local and national levels, 'ethnic media' are often presented as one of the main ways in which different migrant groups (often defined as language — ethnic/migrant — communities) attempt to retain their original language and voice their particular cultural identity. As such, 'ethnic media' are often celebrated and presented as one of the major expressions of multiculturalism and as contributors to social harmony and tolerance in Australia. Like other 'cultural spaces' constructed by official multiculturalism 'ethnic radio-programs' (and for that matter 'Ethnic Radio Stations') are depicted as 'cultural' sites that provide 'migrants' with a tolerable harmonious setting, and the possibility of maintaining culture and voicing their otherness. Accordingly, ethnic radio programs are

categorised as cultural expressions of enriching/tolerated 'migrant communities' and are framed as 'the many voices of one Australia', a single inclusive multicultural nation.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, the ambiguity of such 'migrant communities' and the way in which the category 'ethnic media' and specific 'ethnic programs' construct the 'community' that they were assumed to represent was totally ignored. While the relationships between the 'community' and its radio programs were often misunderstood by policy makers, this was not the case for the 'ethnics' themselves who realised the importance of such media, not only in representing a given 'community' but also in constructing and promoting a particular understanding of the 'community'. Furthermore, in contrast to seeing the radio program as only about 'locality', the programs were also regarded as important in managing and expressing particular relationships with the homelands.

#### 'ETHNIC MEDIA' AS DIASPORIC PRACTICE

The central role played by the electronic media in the construction of diasporic identities has largely been overlooked in anthropological literature on migration and ethnic communities in Australia.<sup>10</sup> Appearing together on the dial of an 'ethnic radio station' (or as 'access' programs on non-ethnic community radio stations), the 'ethnic' programs are constructed as 'a service to our multicultural communities'. Yet, in a very interesting and profound way, such programs operate as diasporic sites, whereby the notion and the experience of the 'community' and 'identity' are

produced and negotiated. Furthermore, it is the diasporic character of such 'communities', their negotiation and relation with 'elsewhere' (within the setting of the new 'place') which make such media networks extremely important. 'Ethnic media', far from being a mere expression of the multicultural nation, should be regarded as 'particularistic media' which, in contrast to the 'majority media', are reconstructing or maintaining 'fragile or imperilled communities — minority groups, migrants, exile and diasporas'.<sup>11</sup>

Instead of being unproblematic — given, merely 'factual' — diaspora is always an intellectual construction tied to a given narrative. Like other types of communities, but more so than most, diasporas are incarnations of existing discourses, interpretants of such discourses, echoes or anticipations of historical projects. They are 'imagined communities' *par excellence*, and they can be imagined in a number of possible, sometimes conflicting ways. Thus their maintenance, far from being a technical problem, involves a constant activity of reinvention.<sup>12</sup>

The term diaspora is important in this context, as it emphasises attachments to another place. The diasporic experience is one that revolves around the dialectic of 'home and away'. It is clear, however, that the diaspora is not only about movement and transnationality. In a sense, as Clifford (1997) argues, diaspora is always about the locality. It is a cultural form which, through deploying transnational networks, tries to accommodate as well as resist the host countries:

Diaspora is different from travel (though it works through travel practices) in that it is not temporary. It involves dwelling, maintaining communities, having collective homes away from home.<sup>13</sup>

The experience of the locality is therefore embodied within the complex relations that migrants maintain with their families, local communities and the nation-states from which migration took place.

Ethnic radio programs' cultural and social importance for the producers and their audiences illustrate a set of complex diasporic practices which relate to multiple forms of symbolic attachments to the homelands. Such a perspective challenges any simplistic view of migrants (or 'ethnics') as people who 'naturally' belong to a homogenised local 'ethnic/migrant community', or as members of some original national imagined community 'back home'. In order to understand the complexity of the term 'community', it is necessary to look carefully at the various processes and cultural practices by which migrants and their cultural brokers evoke the 'elsewhere' as they produce meanings and reconstruct their life 'here' in Australia. Such relations and networks were amongst the issues that I looked at when I conducted an ethnographic study of Latin American immigrants in Adelaide.

#### THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING

Ethnographically, I had the opportunity to take part in the development of *Voces de Nuestra Tierra* (*Voces*) and the *El programa Radial Salvadoreño* (The Salvadorean Radio Program), almost from the moment they began operating

during 1997 and 1998. The two programs were not part of the local Ethnic Radio Station, 5EBI, which runs a weekly one-hour Latin American Program. Rather, both operated under the category of 'access programs for NESB migrants' at two local non-ethnic community radio stations, which operate as part of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA).

These two programs, like other community radio programs, were organised and run by volunteers. Both programs' organisers and participants were mostly active members of various social organisations and communal activities. In order to work in radio, they were trained locally by the radio stations as part of the Australian Ethnic Radio Training Project (AERTP). Both *Voces* and the Salvadorean Radio Program were locally produced and broadcast live for one hour a week. They were both funded by their audiences and by 'ethnic program grants' given directly to the stations by the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF).<sup>14</sup> While officially operating under the regulation of the CBF, in reality the programs were self-controlled and were not closely regulated or monitored. Decisions about what and what not to broadcast were mostly in the hands of the participants. Broadcasting in Spanish meant that the programs were also free from close supervision by the station that would normally interfere only in the case of an official complaint.

Community radio stations cannot afford to monitor audiences like commercial radio stations do. Public funding and some governmental support means that they don't need to constantly try and access large parts of the population. This, however, does not mean that community radio stations are

financially secure, far from it.<sup>15</sup> The stations constantly need to search for funds and get the financial support of their listeners. One source of revenue comes from fees paid by access programs like the ones I am describing in this paper. For these reasons, however, it is sensible to argue that community programs will generally tend to reflect the ideas and feelings of the volunteers rather than those of the 'community' they service. An access 'ethnic program' is somehow different from other community programs mainly because its audience is believed to be less 'abstract' and more identifiable. In other words, the audience is assumed to be a 'community' prior to the establishment of the program.

As part of my ethnographic research and in challenging such an assumption, I was interested in studying the process by which an 'audience' is turned into a 'community'. At the same time, given the nature of such media, my research looked mainly at the organisers of the programs, and the programs that they produced. As such I looked mainly at the way the audience was imagined and constructed by the programs, rather than at the 'real' audiences and the ways that they perceived these programs. As a participant observer of both programs I was interested in finding out why and how the programs operated. I looked at the ways in which decisions about what to broadcast and what was newsworthy were made. In particular, I was interested in the radio programs as 'cultural performances' in which particular interpretations of the 'community' and the countries of origin were performed.

*Voces de Nuestra Tierra* and the Salvadorean Program related differently to the country (or countries) of origin in selecting particular news and musical

items to be broadcast. Yet they also differed from each other in the ways in which such connections were expressed or performed in the programs and the ways in which such representations related to particular social relations. Furthermore, the two programs provided alternative understandings of the generic 'Latin American' categorisation. It was the programs' ambivalent positions toward the generic category 'Latino/Latin American', as a marker of their collective diasporic 'identity' and of the local 'ethnic community', that placed the two programs in opposition to each other.

#### VOCES DE NUESTRA TIERRA: AN ELECTRONIC HOME AWAY FROM HOME

*Voces de Nuestra Tierra* began to broadcast during 1997 as an alternative program to the Latin American Program that operated weekly on 5EBI, the only local Ethnic Community Radio station in Adelaide. The initiative for a new community program came from the Federation of Spanish Speaking Communities of South Australia, an umbrella ethnic organisation that aimed to represent the various Latin American organisations and nationalities in Adelaide.<sup>16</sup>

The established Latin American Program on 5EBI broadcasted for one hour a week, it played popular Latin American music, personal greetings (*saludos*) and provided information about different social activities and various organisations. Yet, in its attempt to represent the 'Latin American community' *in total*, the program avoided broadcasting news items (from Latin America and from Australia) and did not play any 'controversial' musical items

(e.g. political or protest music). In a way, the Latin American Program adopted a 'neutral' position, one that provided access for various individuals and organisations that wished to publicise a particular social activity, but at the same time it refused any further involvement with any particular group or organisation in the making of the program.

This is not to say that the Latin American Program ignored, or was not influenced by its audience, rather it seems that the operator of the program decided, for her own practical reasons, to avoid affiliation with any specific group within the 'community'. Such a strategy was the only way she felt she could represent the *entire* 'community' which she perceived, like many other Latin American migrants, to be highly divided. As a result, the program was usually referred to by many Latin Americans as 'Claudia's program', the name of the presenter, and not by its official name nor even as 'our' program.

Like the Latin American program, the Federation had claim over the 'community', and the various organisations that it represented felt that they had no influence on the format and content (musical and otherwise) of the existing Latin American Program. Part of the problem was that this particular program predated the arrival of most of the Salvadoreans and many other migrants and refugees who now saw themselves as being part of the 'Latin American community'.

This was the general background which led to the establishment of *Voces de Nuestra Tierra*. In its declaration of principles the new radio program presented itself in the following manner:

Este programa radial nace como un medio de difusión alternativo y

complementario, a los ya existentes en la comunidad de habla hispana, con el proposito de abarcar temas de contenido cultural, social e histórico para así poder profundizar y compartir la riqueza de valores de nuestro pueblos, brindando, a la vez, un espacio a aquellos nuevos talentos que vitalizan y perpetuan el canto, poesía y toda arte de nuestras raíces indígenas y populares.

(This Radio program is born as an alternative and complementary means of dissemination to the existing programs for the Spanish speaking community. It proposes promoting cultural, social and historical themes in order to promote and share the richness of the values of our people. It also offers a space for new talents that vitalise and perpetuate through song, poetry and other art forms, our popular and indigenous roots.)

In accordance with the reference to 'Spanish speaking communities' in the Federation's name, the new program also defined its audience as consisting of a particular 'language community'. Due to the fact that the program was initially organised by people from various nationalities and as a representation of these various nationalities, its name in Spanish did not allude to any specific cultural, national group ('voices of our land'). The reference to 'our land' was inclusive of all 'Latin Americans' and the program deliberately avoided its identification with any single 'national' identity.

As outlined in its declaration of principles, *Voces* regarded itself as an alternative to the existing Spanish language programs. Being an alternative program implied, according to some of the organisers, that *Voces* would adopt

critical and political views regarding the situation in South and Central America. According to these organisers, such a political position was not provided by any of the other programs in Spanish, including the national SBS programs.

Some of the volunteers on the original team who had initiated the program were political refugees, who had been members of left-wing opposition groups in Chile and shared similar experiences of persecution and torture by the regime. As such they saw the importance of the program in promoting issues such as human rights abuses in Latin America, the situation in Cuba, the struggle against US global capitalism and the commemoration of important political events, such as the military coup in Chile or the Cuban revolution. Those who were opposed to these political aspects of the program were mainly Salvadoreans and other Latin Americans who did not share the same political views and had had totally different personal and collective histories from those of the Chilean political refugees.

As soon as *Voces* began to operate the political commitment became a source of tension amongst its various organisers. Arguments were conducted about every musical item that was chosen, as well as about the form and content of the program. Due to the 'political' tension surrounding the content and the meanings of the program, the division was soon interpreted as a conflict between the 'Chilean' and the 'Salvadorean' organisers. Yet, the struggle within the program was not only about different political views. The opposition was not directed towards 'left' politics as such, but rather against the relevance of such politics in the setting of a local community program. The main

argument of the Salvadorean opponents was that the political aspect of the program portrayed a particular Chilean point of view and history that did not represent or speak to the larger community. What led to a total breakdown in communication was the way the Chilean political refugees, defined derogatorily by their opponents, as *los politicos*, interpreted such accusations as attempts to silence them by undermining their political commitment and as censorship of the program.

Roberto, one of the Chilean organisers, told me about some of these conflicts that had happened shortly prior to my arrival and participation in the program:

*When we began broadcasting there was this Argentinian woman who wanted to join us and be part of the program, I don't think that you know her. Anyway I wanted to play a song by Mercedes Sosa and she said that she hates this music and that I should not play it. She was saying that in Argentina everyone hates Mercedes Sosa because everybody knows that she is a communist. Can you believe it? With the Salvadoreans we had different sorts of arguments, they only wanted to play Cumbia and Merengue, and there was this one person who wanted us to read the weather report from El Salvador. I thought that this was ridiculous, why speak about the weather in El Salvador when you are living in Adelaide? They [the Salvadoreans] wanted us to read news from El Salvador and to do it with a Salvadorean accent.*

On the other hand when I spoke to Eduardo, one of the Salvadoreans who left *Voces* shortly after it began broadcasting, he argued that the problem was that the Chileans forcibly took over

the program that was supposed to be inclusive of all the community:

*These Chileans are really 'sinvergüenzas' (dishonest, shameless). They did not want us to play our music and literally took over the program. Who wants to hear their old political music anyhow? We need our own program as Salvadoreans because we cannot work with these Chileans. And anyway they are so divided. We have some divisions amongst ourselves but not like them. It is just that we are from two different cultures. Maybe they will tell you that the Salvadoreans took over the Federation but this is because when they controlled it they only looked after themselves.*

It is important to note that such tensions and conflicts were rarely expressed openly. Instead of open confrontations, the conflict worked more at the level of gossip amongst networks of groups and individuals. This is what made such tensions much harder to resolve and they usually led to further divisions. As the 'Salvadoreans' gained control of the Federation and left the program, *Voces* declared itself to be an independent radio program, and came to be known amongst other Latinos, though not by the organisers, as the 'Chilean program'.

Clearly, this conflict needs to be understood in the context of the way many of these migrants and refugees had experienced the media (and politics) in their own countries. Especially where the media was used by the military regimes across Latin America to impose a 'truth' which no one could challenge. It was in this context that Mario, one of the Chilean political refugees who ran the program, argued that the importance of this local broadcast was not to represent the local community, but rather to bring 'alternative' information to listeners in

Chile who could tune in to the program via the Internet. In an interesting diasporic twist, the migratory 'voices of our land' had become 'voices for our land'. The program was now seen as a means to be heard, not only in the 'new' (multicultural) locality, but also as a way to participate in, and be part of the 'original' culture, and its political space 'back home'.<sup>17</sup>

As Eduardo, one of the Salvadoreans who had left the program after the initial conflict remarked:

*Voces are broadcasting to a fictitious community, they don't even know who is listening to them. I listened yesterday to the program and they talked for 10 minutes about Pinochet. For them the word 'community' is just a word, nothing more, because they are not part of the community.*

Such statements need to be understood in relation to the political and symbolic struggle to represent the 'community'. What the Salvadorean speaker challenged is the legitimacy of *Voces* to talk from a position of the 'community' as an authorised 'voice' of, and for the 'community'. The people of *Voces*, from the perspective of their opponents, forcefully took control of what was supposed to be a 'community' program. In Bourdieu's terms, they gained control of an authorised space from where they spoke as if they were the 'community'. As 'Chileans' and as political refugees the people in *Voces* denied access to Eduardo, the Salvadorean player who struggled to gain entry into a social position from which he, as a 'Salvadorean' (and from his perspective a 'real' member of the 'community'), wanted to speak *in the name* of the 'community'.<sup>18</sup>

The remark about the listeners in

Chile as the 'true' audience of the program was partly made in defence of the crisis of legitimation (to *speak as a community*) faced by the 'political' organisers of *Voces* who decided to break away from the Federation. At the same time, it also indicates how the uses of new technologies challenge the imagery of the 'community' and its social networks as something that is necessarily bound to a particular geographical locality or a localised 'ethnic community'. An ethnic radio program that claims it has listeners in Chile testifies not only to the political commitment of the Chilean refugees who produce it, but it also reveals their diasporic motivation in making it. The paradox of 'being an alternative' for listeners in Chile lies in the way in which the radio program itself used the Internet to download 'alternative' information from Chile and elsewhere. In fact, the Internet played an important role in the program making, as it facilitated the gathering of specific information that suited the organisers' political views and interests. *Punto Final*, for example, a left-wing Chilean newspaper, as well as other alternative news services, was preferable to mainstream newspapers which were regarded as governmental propaganda.

The team that ran the program at this stage consisted of two young women (one Chilean and one Mexican) and three men, all Chilean. The Chilean men, and to a certain degree the Chilean woman, shared similar political beliefs as well as personal histories of political persecution in Chile. Whilst the Mexican woman could identify with some of the political views expressed by the others, she was of a different nationality and saw herself mainly as a migrant rather than a political refugee. As such she often felt that she was not *really* part of the group and had very little influence on the content or

presentation style of the program. The two women at the program were also younger than the men which added another dimension to their position within the team.

Due to that initial conflict and the fact that the people who remained in the program shared similar political beliefs and had similar personal histories, there were no further discussions (or conflicts) about issues the program should promote or express. An understanding emerged of what was important or appropriate for broadcasting and a particular presentation style and a distinctive musical content was adopted. The decisions that had to be taken (for example, which texts to read) were normally made shortly before each program. Each person prepared a particular section of the program (the news, the community announcements etc.), and shortly before they began broadcasting they sat together and quickly showed each other what they had brought, usually without any debate or disagreement. There were, however, subtle ways of influencing the program, such as adopting a different presentation style, bringing a CD to be played or by selecting a particular text to be read. These 'quiet' negotiations shaped the content and the presentation style of the program.

As with other radio programs, the process of broadcasting alternated between the 'off-air' sections, in which music was played, and the 'on-air' in which the mikes were open. Alternating between the musical items, the 'on air' sections were comprised of:

- 1) the *Theme of the day*, usually a text concerning current political developments in Latin America;
- 2) *Cultural Theme*, which included general subjects regarding a set of

ideas or a particular point of view — taken from the opinion section of various Latin American newspapers;

- 3) *Latin American News* section referring to different countries in Latin America; and,
- 4) a section of *Community Announcements* where information about different social activities and local organisations was read and various governmental and non-governmental services were promoted.

In some cases, short news items about Australia, mainly political news, were translated and read during the program under the category *Australian News*. On rare occasions an interview was conducted in the studio, normally with a promoter of a particular social activity or a special guest.

This particular structure led the presenters into a style of presentation that minimised any personal commentary or informal conversational style when on-air. The texts, taken from various internet sites, were often read as they were written without any form of editing or rewriting or adding of personal commentary. There was also a deliberate decision taken, to avoid any commentary or further reference to local social events, so as to clearly differentiate this program from the other local Latin American radio programs. Sports, *fiestas*, religious celebrations and even political activities (apart from announcing the dates and locations) were never talked about on the program. While it is hard to say exactly why this 'formal' style of presentation was adopted, it seems that it was partly related to the notion that the program was an alternative voice to the existing local radio program. The 'seriousness' of the

program was achieved not only via the 'important content', that is, the 'political' and 'serious' texts and music that were presented, but also in the 'performance' itself. In other words, to be an 'alternative' program meant, amongst other things, avoiding the 'fun' image of 'Latin American' culture and music.

More than the articles that were read during the program, it was the music that symbolised the political identity of *Voces*. The preference was towards protest music, or what is known in Chile and across Latin America as the 'new song' or *nueva canción*. As Prirad, who studied this musical movement, explains:

The *nueva canción* is a living reflection of the world it comes from; it bears all the wounds of the struggle for the social and economic emancipation of Latin America, as well as its hopes, its doubts and its victories. Because of this it does not need anyone to tell it what it has to do. Its commitment is a spontaneous one and it becomes part of the history of the people to the extent that it assumes the role that the people assign to it. Sometimes it serves the purpose of a political tract and its only value is to have acted as witness to the moment that gave it birth; at times it simply repeats old songs from the past, while at others it rises to high levels and becomes the universal expression of the blossoming of the Latin American soul, to remain, like all true art, part of the innate consciousness of the people.<sup>19</sup>

The 'new song' came to be known across Latin America as *canciones de lucha* (songs of struggle).<sup>20</sup> *La canción es también un arma de la revolución* — 'The song is also a weapon of the revolution' — as it came to be known in Chile and other parts of Latin America. For the organisers of

the program the act of broadcasting this sort of music in Adelaide was seen as a continuation of the role this music had played in Latin America. As Mario, one of the volunteers in the program explains:

*The music is very important for me. It is an educational tool. You can pass a message by using a song, to teach something. There is a Sandinista song that tells you how to build and use weapons; this is one way a song can teach people how to fight and change things. I like Latin American bands that use their music in order to protest and try to improve things. The music in our program needs to reflect the difficult social realities in Latin America, the drugs, crime and poverty. Some people don't like it, they say that I only show the bad things in Latin America and that I never talk about the good things, but this is the reality and this music reflects it. To play only happy music is senseless especially when there are real problems.*

The organisers regarded the broadcast of this music in *Voces* as promoting a pan-national Latin American identity. According to Mario, this particular music was not familiar outside the continent, where 'Latin American music' is often identified merely as dance music. 'People need to know that Latin music is not only Salsa and Merengue', as he explained. Such a statement totally ignores the heavily political message within *salsa* music. Yet, it is possible that for Mario, being a Chilean political refugee, the revolutionary messages of the *nueva canción* were considered 'truly' political in contrast to the social commentary in US *Latino salsa* music.

Publicly playing such 'political' music in the context of migration is clearly more than a political statement. The possession of significant cultural objects from 'home',

and their presentation in the new locality helps generate a sense of a 'homely' feeling in the new place. It is based on 'a desire to promote the feeling of being there *here*'.<sup>21</sup> Such practices are often part of a 'positive experience nostalgia' that helps 'foster intimation of homely feelings'.<sup>22</sup>

However, the 'political' aspect of the program was never discussed or expressed openly 'on-air'. Apart from the reference to being 'alternative', *Voces* never declared openly any political affiliation. Such an ambiguity, as one of my other informants told me, was a common practice adopted by the opposition forces in Chile in order to avoid arrest, torture and elimination under the military regime. Some Chileans talked about the need to hide your 'political' identification in Adelaide, as a way of avoiding 'burning' yourself within the 'community'. Others claimed that the military regime had previously sent agents to locate political enemies abroad, including in Australia. While these claims are possible, it is interesting to note that at present such 'secrecy' was based more on the polarisation of the Chilean society during the 1970s and the 1980s, than on a fear of political persecution in Australia or in Chile.

This type of political positioning generated further criticism by the opponents of the program as it contradicted *Voces*'s claim to be an inclusive 'community' program. Some even regarded the program's slogan — '*Voces de Nuestra Tierra — Cada Miércoles, la primera a la izquierda del dial*' — 'Voices of our land — every Wednesday, on the *left side* of your dial', as evidence of the program's hidden political identification.

*Voces de Nuestra Tierra*, as an alternative program, rejected the idea of

being representative, yet by making the program and by being recognised by the radio station as representatives of an 'ethnic community', it still had a claim to be speaking for the 'community'. At the same time the program adopted a very critical position towards the people that it was supposedly representing. *Voces* refused to be part of or express 'fun' — *Latino* culture and memories. This aspect, while appreciated by some, was seen by others as evidence of the program's arrogance. This is how Rodrigo, a Chilean migrant who was not involved in the making of the program, described it:

*I thought that Voces de Nuestra Tierra, was innovative, but that doesn't mean it was a good program. They were just starting out and realistically the development of any project takes a long time, it should be considered as an experimental stage, but if a program is representing a community it should represent the community, not think itself above the community which is what Voces de Nuestra Tierra thought of itself. Voces de Nuestra Tierra wasn't natural, they were 'try hards', but I am biased, you know, because I know these people; they get caught up in unresolved passions. Try hard intellectuals I call them.*

The program and its organisers occupied a marginal position in relation to what they saw as the rest of the 'community'. Yet it was a position which, from their perspective and in contrast to the other radio programs and social organisations, represented the 'true' Latin American identity and history. Being 'political', even if this was not openly stated, was to represent the 'real' Latin America. As Mario explains:

*I hate it when people call me 'politico' not because I don't like the term but because I*

*think it is important to be political. Because of such stupidity, when I first came here, other Chileans warned me not to deal with politics, they told me that it is dangerous. There was a real social pressure not to speak about politics because some were really afraid that if they did they would be sent back to Chile. They call us 'politicos' but they forget that they are all here because of political persecution. For some people everything you say is politics. Is it being political to talk against Pauline Hanson? I cannot understand it. We are lucky that at the moment, here in Australia, it is not yet dangerous to say what you really think.*

As we can see, the position of being 'political' and of 'speaking the truth' needs to be understood not only in the historical and political context of Chile, but also in the migratory anxiety of 'change' and the fear of forgetting or losing one's original identity. The radio program and the 'alternative' music in *Voces* operated as a boundary marker between the 'non-political' and the 'political' Chileans (and other Latin Americans) without ever stating clearly such a position.

While such struggles can be regarded as a continuation of the political struggle in Latin America, it is important to note that to a certain degree it is a product of the definition of the 'Latin Americans' as members of a local 'ethnic/migrant community' in Australia. In other words, the struggle is not only about the 'representations' of the 'past' (in Chile or in Latin America) or the 'present' (of the local community). Rather it is a struggle about entering an authorised position which is very much a product of official multiculturalism.

For the volunteers, however, the actual making of the program was more than just a mere claim to represent the

'community'. For the participants in the studio, *Voces* operated as a migratory gathering and as a 'nostalgic' cultural performance of their identities. Clearly, the term 'nostalgic' cannot be understood simply as something of the past, which undermines the symbolic power of the program, but rather as something that 'embeds the past in the present in a dynamic way'.<sup>23</sup> The program worked as symbolic acknowledgement of the continued attachments with the homeland. By playing 'political' music, and singing along with the songs (off-air), by reading 'alternative' news articles and by broadcasting other important 'voices' from the past, the participants utilised the program as a weekly ritual. *Voces* became another form of migratory gathering that enabled the organisers (and perhaps their audience) to re-live important events from their personal and collective memory and current life in their homelands.

As a cultural performance, *Voces* worked to transplant the memories of the homeland into the particular present. One such interesting example was a special program that was produced for the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the military coup in Chile. This traumatic event was captured for many Chileans by the last speech of president Salvador Allende.<sup>24</sup> *Radio Magallanes*, a governmental Chilean radio station in Santiago, transmitted this historic speech on 11 September 1973, as the armed forces began bombarding the presidential palace at *La Moneda*. Taking into account the stress and the fears felt during the first hours of the military coup such a transmission was one of those media events that become inscribed in the collective memory; 'everybody was glued to the radio that day' as one Chilean recalled. By replaying the voice and last

words of the dead president, *Voces* worked as a commemorative ritual. It enabled the reliving of an event that symbolised the destruction of the dream of a 'peaceful road to socialism' and the years of terror and torture that followed.<sup>25</sup>

In the context of migration such 'voices' are often related to an imaginary space of the original 'home'.

Like listening to the taped message of the relatives sent with the recent arrival to Sydney, the voice operates as a conduit to the imaginary world of the homeland (as 'back home') ... The voice operates as an imagined metonymy, in the sense that it is metonymic of a totality that does not and has never existed, but which is imagined as a homely totality from the standpoint of the present.<sup>26</sup>

Clearly, the emotional effect of such a public broadcast is very powerful, as for some, it brings back not only memories of the 'original' home but also the stressful and traumatic moments of the military coup. Yet, even at such a dramatic moment for the participants who had been persecuted and victimised by the regime, there was no room for any 'on-air' personal comments. It was as if the 'personal' could not and should not be part of the 'political'. In a way, being politically committed from 'here' reminded the participants that they were no longer 'there'. The participants never articulated such a contradiction, which could undermine their effort to see themselves as relevant to the political struggle 'back home'; it was mainly their opponents who, by ridiculing the *políticos*, talked about those who are 'revolutionaries' from afar.

As a form of cultural performance, *Voces* was both about migratory memory

and the present. In its musical and 'political' content *Voces* was saying, 'We are still the same' even when we are here; despite the distance 'we are part of what is going on over there'. From the organisers' perspective the program was not regarded as 'nostalgic' or of 'the past' because it was about being Chilean, Latin American and revolutionary. Yet because of these aspects some Latin American migrants who had different personal histories and political identities to the organisers criticised the program as being non-representative or irrelevant to the local community. As Joaquín, a Chilean migrant who disliked the program explains:

*The music that they play is not interesting and the weekly themes are always very political, and many Chileans here just don't like it. Instead of playing popular music they put on these old songs and they always have to be political songs. They should talk about the situation in Chile today and not about what happened there in Pinochet's time. They think that their political position sounds good but the reality is that it is not representative of the way people think here. I think they find it hard to understand that there are many Chileans who are just not interested to hear about what happened in Chile. These Chileans live now in Australia and this is what interests them and if they show any interest in Chile it is not about what happened there in the past but about what is happening there today. The people at Voces cannot understand that most Chileans here don't want to be part of a Chilean Ghetto. The problem is that they are doing this program for themselves and not for the community. If they want to be more relevant they need to go and talk to the people, they need to be part of the community and speak about things that happen here and not to live in the past.*

It is important to note that the program's contact with its audience was minimal. The phone was hardly ever used during the programs and listeners rarely rang the station during the broadcast. The organisers of *Voces* did talk at times about the need to do something about this, and often joked about an imaginary single listener who never misses a program, but nothing eventuated.

This is not to say that the program had no listeners at all, but that, in a way, the audience was not very important to the organisers. In a similar manner to a clandestine radio station, the political message, and the desire for *being* 'political' in making the program, was more significant than trying to locate the listeners or make them interact with the program.

The social marginalisation of the organisers and the program's alienation from the local 'community', amongst other things, were what eventually led to its downfall. Due to the funding system it is essential for such radio programs to find some method of collecting money from their audiences (the grant covered only half the costs). Other programs relied on donations collected in 'radiothons' (normally run by the station and not by a particular program), sponsors and fundraising *fiestas*. The program managed to collect some funding towards its bill by organising barbecues for supporters and family members and by promoting a few local Latin American businesses as the program sponsors. Yet, after not paying their fees for several months and after the station decided to shift all its 'ethnic' programs to different broadcasting times, *Voces* was kindly advised to sort out its financial situation before it could go on-air again. In other words, the radio station eventually shut

down the program. In total, *Voces* had operated for two years.

#### THE SALVADOREAN PROGRAM

The Salvadorean Program began operating in mid-1998 as an alternative to *Voces*. The same Salvadorean migrants who had initially helped organise *Voces*, as members of the Federation, and who felt that this original program had been 'taken over' by the 'political' Chileans, were now organising the new radio program. From its inception, however, the new team decided to try and access large parts of the 'community' and therefore deliberately avoided any divisive political or religious themes. After their experiences on *Voces*, the organisers defined the new program as 'Salvadorean' and the 'community' they represented as the 'Salvadorean community' and not as 'Latin American'. This narrow national definition was made deliberately in order to deny access to non-Salvadoreans who might have wished to join the program. Yet, almost from the moment the program began operating, the idea was to try and be inclusive of other 'Latin Americans'. As Roberto, one of the organisers and a Salvadorean 'community leader' explains:

*The other radio program (Voces) was too political. They were also too Chilean, they never talked about other countries in Latin America. Our Salvadorean Program is not only for El Salvadoreans, we also bring news from other countries in Latin America as well as other parts of the world. We are now organising the rules of the program. Our goal is to create commitment to the program. As the director of the program my goal is to eventually make it a program for all the*

*Spanish speakers here in Adelaide. We want to invite people from different organisations such as the Chilean Club or the Latin American Club. We want to use the program in order to create a community. We have to find out who is listening to our program. We already have some indication from the people who ring us and send us letters. We know for example, that we also have some Chilean listeners. We prepared a questionnaire in order to find out what the people want to hear and what they think about our program.<sup>27</sup>*

This statement indicates that in a way the Salvadorean Program was also established in opposition to the existing Latin American Program, and not just as an alternative to *Voces*. The same original motivation for challenging the *Latin American Program*, that led to the establishment of *Voces*, was also what motivated the making of the new program.

The demand to avoid politics and religion was presented to the organisers by the station manager as part of the funding regulations of the Community Broadcast Foundation (CBF). This restriction was not seriously explained nor even closely regulated yet it was interpreted by the organisers as a demand to completely avoid any reference to religion and Australian or Latin American politics. This demand suited the desire expressed by the organisers to represent the entire 'community'. As Laura, one of the participants and organisers of the program, explained:

*Some people in our community are from the right, others are from the left. The only way to overcome that gap is to avoid it altogether and not to take any political sides in our program. The program has to be a program for everyone — we should be like one big*

*family for the sake of our children.*

Yet the formal definition of the radio program as *Salvadorean* and not as 'Latin American' (or for that matter 'Spanish speaking') was immediately criticised by non-Salvadorean Latinos as creating further divisions in the 'community'. The people from *Voces* and some members of the Federation, who worked to construct an inclusive notion of a 'Latin American community', saw such an expression as exclusive and divisive. As Silvina, a Chilean and a member at the Federation, explains:

*I listened to their program when I heard that they called themselves the Salvadorean Program and when they played the Salvadorean national anthem I decided to turn my radio off. This was not a program for me. It is like in the book of Galeano<sup>28</sup> who said that even if we all speak Spanish, Latin America will never be united. In my opinion they chose to break away from the Latin American community and to separate themselves from other migrants.*

Such a criticism is similar to the way *Voces* was accused of usurping the position of *speaking as the 'community'*. In this case, as in the previous one, such an accusation is part of the struggle over the symbolic definitions of 'community' that is carried on within the construction of a *local 'Latin American community'* which is supposedly above any particular national (or political) identities. A member of the Federation and a non-Salvadorean 'community leader' told me that he would never speak on a radio program that defines itself as 'Salvadorean' because in principle he opposes any organisation or social group that chooses to define itself according to

a narrow national basis.

The organisers of the program, however, claimed that while the program is a Salvadorean Program, other Latinos were always welcome to participate, at least in promoting their cultural and social events. In a way the organisers chose to narrow their 'definition' of the 'community' (and the program) to its 'national' context to avoid the criticism *Voces* encountered in presenting itself as a 'Latin American' program. Being openly defined as a 'national' program meant that the organisers, as Salvadoreans, saw and defined themselves as one section of the 'Latin American community'. To a certain degree the narrow 'national' definition was deliberately chosen and vigorously guarded in order to avoid (after the experience in *Voces*) possible struggles over the program's definition and its musical and cultural content with other (national, political, religious) groupings within the category of the 'Latin American community'.

An important aspect of the difference between *Voces* and the Salvadorean Program was in the distinct 'Salvadorean' experience of living a sense of a 'community'. Due to the hardship of life in El Salvador and its brutal 12-years civil war between 1980 and 1992, many Salvadoreans came as refugees to Australia accompanied by their extended families. Furthermore, most Salvadoreans tend to live in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. As such many of the Salvadoreans in Adelaide are actually related to each other, know each other from El Salvador and meet almost on a daily basis at their local shopping centres. These aspects resulted in the 'Salvadoreans' developing a sense of a local neighbourhood which most other

Latinos do not have. Another important factor that contributes to their sense of a particular Salvadorean identity was the feeling that the Chileans often discriminated against them and treated them as inferiors.

The radio program adopted particular Salvadorean markers of identity. This was evident in the way it was framed. The program usually opened with the traditional sounds of the *Carbonero*, a type of folkloric Salvadorean music played on the *Marimba*, and closed with the national anthem of El Salvador. Like *Voces*, the program was promoted and explained as a means of educating and maintaining 'cultural identity'. Such a definition was not a direct result of the ways in which official multiculturalism defines 'culture' and the 'community' but more a product of the migratory anxiety of living in a different culture where there is a need to 'keep the culture alive'.<sup>29</sup> As Roberto from the Salvadorean Program explains:

*Many people do not know our culture. Even people from El Salvador who came here do not know our culture. We need to educate them. Our program is about culture, music, and information about our country, about our history and our forefathers. It is not only for the young but also for the adults who will have the opportunity to learn more about their culture.*

It is important to note that the Salvadorean Program operated very differently to *Voces*. Besides being there for the program itself, the team of broadcasters met at other times, almost on a weekly basis, to prepare the texts to be read and discuss different issues regarding the program's content and formation. Such meetings, even when the

decisions discussed were not fully implemented, made the program more of a collective effort than *Voces* ever was. These conversations, training sessions and even rehearsals of the performance (in reading aloud and editing the texts before the program) helped to establish particular meanings and ideas that the program promoted.

In contrast to *Voces*, the Salvadorean Program set out immediately to involve its audience in the program. One of the most important aspects of the program was the broadcasting of *saludos* (greetings) to friends and family members. The *saludos* gave the program a form and means to communicate directly with its audience who, by requesting a particular song to be played, often influenced the musical content of the program. The '*saludos*' also worked to communicate important social information in a direct or subtle manner. When a man, for example, asked for a very sad and romantic song to be played for his wife, it was immediately assumed that they must have had a fight.

As I became more involved in the radio program and the 'community', I also became part of the *saludos* system. I once, however, experienced personally the vicious side of the *saludos* when, as a joke, one of the presenters improvised such a *saludo* directed to me and gave it a romantic hint (a very, very, very warm greeting to Erez from ...). After the program ended the woman who sent me the *saludo* called my home crying, telling me that her father had heard the program and was very upset, as it sounded as if we were having an affair. The interesting aspect of this story is the way even the most innocent *saludos* were decoded and interpreted as carrying social knowledge and at times had real social consequences.

The *saludos* and the way the program was constructed and addressed its audience as a 'community' made it into a virtual public meeting place of various family members and friends. In more than one sense, the *saludos* marked and recreated the different social networks and boundaries of a 'community' as it was experienced for these individuals and social groups. Many of the programs, for example, opened with *saludos* to particular families and individuals whom the presenters knew and presented as 'listeners' or as members of the 'Salvadorean community' even if there was no particular request for such *saludos*.

Like *Voces*, the program provided a news section but, in contrast, the news focused mainly on El Salvador and avoided any political criticism. In a way, the program was simulating radio programs from El Salvador by broadcasting the 'National News' (from El Salvador) as well as 'Departmental News' from different regional zones within El Salvador.

However, by presenting El Salvador in such a way the presenters were criticised by some other El Salvadoreans. The argument made by several people was that by reading the official newspaper from El Salvador, *El Diario de Hoy*, the program was already being 'political' and voluntarily broadcasting governmental propaganda material. While *Voces* was criticised for not representing the *entire* 'community' and for being politically biased, the Salvadorean Program was criticised for presenting El Salvador in an idealised way that avoided mentioning, criticising or explaining the harsh realities of life there.

The program evoked the images and rhetoric of the national 'imagined

community' as the basis of the 'community' life in Adelaide. This 'Salvadorean' effect was achieved by selecting a few common characteristics and presenting these as markers of Salvadorean 'culture' and 'identity'. The term *Guanacos*, for example, is an image invoked by Salvadoreans when referring to themselves as members of a national collectivity. One section of the program was therefore named *raíces guanacas* 'Guanacos roots', and the audience of the program was often addressed as the *Guanacos* in Adelaide.

Initially this section of the program was called 'our land' (*nuestra tierra*) but the organisers felt that this name was too close to *Voces de Nuestra Tierra* and as such decided to change it. During one of the programs they asked the listeners to propose a different name for this section. Most of the suggestions alluded to the 'Salvadorean-ness' of the programs, such as *somos Salvadoreños* (we are Salvadoreans), *mi tierra* (my land), *mi raíz* (my roots, my origin), *mi Cuscatlán* (my Cuscatlán — the indigenous name of El Salvador) and *raíces guanacas* which was eventually chosen.

This particular section of the program presented a short historical account, a discussion about particular Salvadorean celebrations, a poem or a popular folktale. The participants, according to the presenter of this section, saw it as a means of teaching 'our children as well as other Latinos about our Salvadorean history and culture'. Yet there were many other less structured or formal references to 'national' identity which were often made during the program.

Like *Voces*, the program was not only about particular representations but became a social event in itself. The Salvadoreans would literally take over

the small radio station and, apart from the organisers and the presenters, friends and people who did not actively participate in the program would show up and sit outside the studio. The drama outside the studio was as important as what was going on within the studio and what was broadcast on-air. At times there would be up to five people in the studio and a similar number of people outside the studio. During the off-air sections, when the music was playing, people would come in and out of the studio, bring the *Saludos* and joke about a particular song or a particular mistake that was made in the readings.

The team that ran the program consisted of people from different age groups and more or less the same numbers of female and male organisers and presenters. The programs were often accompanied with food and drinks and the participants tended to stay, talk and tell jokes long after the program had ended. It was also common to organise a *pupusjada* to mark birthdays and other special occasions for the participants.<sup>30</sup>

As in *Voces*, the program had a section dedicated to *community announcements*, but seeing themselves as a 'community' program meant not just announcing but also talking about different local social activities. The program reported, for example, the results of local amateur soccer matches. Interestingly, such a 'locality' was also constructed in relation to the 'imagined community' in El Salvador. The sports section provided the results of soccer matches played in El Salvador alongside the results of 'local' matches. As such the program created a cultural space that brought together life for Salvadoreans 'here', and the present life in the homeland.

The music on the program was also

very different from the music played on *Voces*. Initially, the intention was that the program would broadcast music 'for everyone'. The broadcasters therefore categorised the music according to musical styles that they saw as suited to the particular social characteristics of the 'community'.<sup>31</sup> They looked for 'songs for the oldies', 'songs for young people' and even 'children's songs'. Most of the songs played during the program consisted of popular 'Latin' music such as *merengue*, *música tropical*, *cumbia*, *salsa*, *bolero* and *balada romántica*. The preference was for popular music that could be heard in many parts of Latin America as well as amongst the large Latin American diaspora, and especially in the US. In this sense the music was not 'Salvadorean' per se, even when it was clear that this sort of 'Latin' music was very popular in El Salvador.

Interestingly the different musical character of *Voces* from the Salvadorean Program was explained as a cultural difference between the Chileans and the Salvadoreans. This is how Monica, one of the participants in the Salvadorean Program, puts it:

*Last week I met someone who is what you can call objective, he is not a Salvadorean and not a Chilean. He asked me why Voces is always so political and why the music they play is always protest music while in our program we play music that is much happier and we never talk about politics. I told him that this is so because we see life differently from the Chileans. We as Salvadoreans suffered a lot, probably more than the Chileans, yet we always try to continue with our lives and not to see our lives as that of a victim. We take responsibility for our lives and do not try to look all the time for someone to blame for our situation. It is important to*

*change, to continue your life despite the sufferings and the painful memories.*

It is interesting to note that popular music in El Salvador (and elsewhere) is not necessarily 'Latin' music, rather it often includes many songs and musical genres in English, mainly from the US. Yet, due to the migratory experience an 'ethnic radio program' is always about a particular 'identity' and as such will tend to play only music that is considered to be part of the 'original' identity. This is also true in the case of *Voces* in which the music that was presented as 'truly' Latin American was consciously selected in contrast to the more popular 'Latin' music.

One of the most striking differences between the two radio programs was the style of presentation. The two programs differed not only in the claims they had for particular 'identities' and their different interpretations of the local 'community', but also in the performance itself. As in *Voces*, the news and other texts presented in the Salvadorean Program were also read almost unedited, yet the Salvadorean presenters developed an informal way of addressing each other, and talking to each other 'on-air'. This type of *Bla Bla Bla*, as the participants described it, made the presentation style of the program more fluid and rapid than the formal 'reading' in *Voces*.

This is how Pablo, a Chilean migrant who was not involved in the making of these programs but normally tuned in to listen to both, described this difference to me:

*In terms of presentation, I thought they [Voces] were very boring. You can't compare it to the Salvadorean Program, for example, which is natural, has a great flow, it's edgy,*

*has a rhythm and I'm not talking about the music, I'm talking about the on-air communication and presentation. It's a very community focused program and represents all branches of the community. I think they have done a great job of learning from the defects of other programs.*

Such a statement should not be read as if the Salvadorean Program was simply better than *Voces*; rather, it shows how the different style of presentation, more than the content itself, became one of the major distinctions between the two programs.

The 'Salvadorean-ness' of the program was exhibited and performed on a level that was very different from simply reading the 'national news' or playing the national anthem. 'Being' Salvadorean was about the particular way language was being used. This vivid style of presentation was important in the way it worked to construct a particular Salvadorean 'essence' of the presenters and the program. The particular accents of the presenters and the use of Salvadorean 'slang' (*caliche*) and jokes became an important part of the program. Talking *caliche*, and having a Salvadorean accent, operated here in a similar manner to the way *Voces* used its music. Interestingly the use of *caliche* also generated criticism by some Salvadoreans who felt that this type of 'bad' language had no place on radio. Still the use of *caliche* worked as a boundary marker, something that only Salvadoreans could understand and be a part of.

*Voces*, in contrast, had never emphasised the performativity of 'language' in such a way. The presenters' accents had no special role in the program. It was the 'political' message or the political identity of the program that was stressed and performed, rather than

a particular accent or 'slang'. For the Salvadorean presenters, however, like the use of the *nueva canción* in *Voces*, talking *caliche* about events that happened locally was seen as the real connection to El Salvador.

The adoption of this blatant 'Salvadorean' national identity often collided with the construction of the Salvadoreans as part of the larger 'Latin American community'. In fact being 'too' Salvadorean was always seen as potentially alienating for non-Salvadorean listeners. In order to combat the criticism of being a program *just for* Salvadoreans, the presenters decided to mention other Latinos when addressing their audiences. 'This program is your program for the Salvadorean family and all other Latinos who live here in South Australia.' This statement was deliberately promoted on various programs in order to be more inclusive of the non-Salvadorean listeners. In that sense, as much as it was about a particular 'identity', the program was also seen as a means of uniting 'our' 'Latin American community'.

One interesting example of the collision between being both 'Salvadorean' and Latino was evident when it was decided to broadcast a special fundraising program for the victims of the massive devastation in Central America left by Hurricane Mitch. An immediate question was whether the Salvadorean Program should collect money only for El Salvador, or whether it should collect and send the money to the rest of the countries affected by the hurricane. Those in favour of helping only El Salvador argued that, as Salvadoreans, 'we need to help, first of all our families and our compatriots', especially when world attention was on Honduras, which

had been devastated to a much larger degree. Those who were against such a particularistic position claimed that privileging El Salvador would be seen as Salvadorean egoism. The program found itself in a difficult position. While presenting itself as a Salvadorean Program, helping just the Salvadoreans would drive off any other Latinos, especially those from the countries that were badly devastated who would see it as an insult. It was finally decided to ask the listeners to name the country to which they would like to donate. The feeling that it would be 'unfair' to privilege El Salvador illustrates how, in one sense, the Salvadorean Program (which in the first place was defined as 'Salvadorean' in relation to the idea of a general 'Latin American community') always had in mind the rest of the Latinos.

By adopting a particular national identity, the program had also become a place where special national holidays were marked and celebrated by dedicating a particular program and playing particular songs and encouraging listeners to send special *saludos* for these occasions. 'Teacher's Day', 'Independence Day', 'Father's Day' and 'Mother's Day' were all mentioned and celebrated according to their calendar dates in El Salvador. Like the commemorative aspects in *Voces*, the celebration of national holidays at the Salvadorean Program worked to promote the imaginary world of the homeland in the new locality, even if these took on very different forms and expressions.<sup>32</sup>

## CONCLUSION

'Ethnic media' are often idealised within official multiculturalism. Such media are presented as one of the main

achievements of the policy and are seen as evidence and an expression of 'cultural diversity', and as sites where 'ethnic/migrant communities' are tolerated while enriching the Australian nation. Yet the actual use of such media by different migrant groups points to the complexity of the diasporic position and the 'duality of place'. The media, while undoubtedly a site of struggle over the 'community' and 'locality', are also where the diasporic experience is being constructed and particular identities are performed.

There is a need, therefore, to distinguish between the official definition of the migrants and their communities within the multiculturalist imagery, and the various ways in which 'ethnic' media operate as social constructions about, by or for, a particular minority group. The 'ethnic programs' are not only a result of the state reification of the localisation of 'ethnicity' and the 'community'; rather, despite such official discourse, migrants construct and generate contested experiences and interpretations of the 'old' and 'new' place in ways that compound this duality into a particular diasporic locality. The music, the cultural content of the programs, their style of presentation and the ways in which their performances of 'culture' become a form of migratory gathering, enable the broadcasters and the audiences to construct a feeling of being at 'home' in the new place.

The point of the comparison between the two radio programs is not to argue that one was better than the other, or merely that the two were very different from each other, even though they were both officially operating under the same framework and from a similar cultural logic. Nor was the point to show that the Salvadorean Program was more

'community' oriented in contrast to *Voces* which was more 'nostalgic' in its reference to the 'past'. Instead, I would argue that both programs were attempting to construct diasporic identities and perform different interpretations of the migratory experience.

Is it only a Latin American experience? I believe not. Such cases merely point again to the need to criticise the image of 'culture' that is carried by official multiculturalism. Attempts to stay connected to their countries of origin are the means by which migrants come to understand and experience their life in a 'new' place. Such attachments are not merely an act of nostalgia or part of the effort to maintain culture, as depicted by multiculturalism. Rather, relations with the homeland are part of the ambiguity of 'home and away' that constitute the life experiences of many immigrants and construct their various ways of generating 'communities' in their new context.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 P.N. Thornley, *Broadcasting Policy In Australia: Political Influences and the Federal Government's Role in the Establishment and Development of Public/Community Broadcasting in Australia: A History 1939 to 1992*, PhD thesis, University of Newcastle, NSW, 1999, p. 146.
- 2 R. Patterson, 'The Origins of Ethnic Broadcasting: Turning the Dial in Australia', in *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 1981, vol. 2: 37-60, p. 42.
- 3 Thornley, *Broadcasting Policy in Australia*, p. 153.
- 4 Medibank was a national health fund promoted by the Labor party.

- 5 Patterson, 'The Origins of Ethnic Broadcasting'.
- 6 Patterson, 'The Origins of Ethnic Broadcasting', p. 45.
- 7 Radio-SBS presents its programs as language programs (68 in total) and not as programs which are directed at a specific ethnic or national group. For example, the 'Spanish' programs include Latin Americans and Spaniards who are deemed to be members of a single 'Language Community'. As Jakubowicz explains, this definition was a result of a decision, taken by the SBS management, to prevent nationalist and ethnic separatist groups taking control of the programs (A. Jakubowicz, 'Speaking in Tongues: Multicultural Media and the Constitution of the Socially Homogeneous Australian', in H. Wilson ed., *Australian Communications and the Public Sphere*, (Melbourne: The Macmillan Company of Australia, 1989, pp. 105-127).
- 8 Community Radio is part of public broadcasting in Australia, which involves non-profit non-government stations serving particular geographic areas. For a detailed political history of the emergence of community broadcasting in Australia, see Thornley, *Broadcasting Policy in Australia*. Most licensed community radio and community television stations and those aspiring to gain such a licence are part of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA), a national representative organisation for community broadcasters.
- 9 'SBS radio — the many voices of one Australia' — is the jingle of the 'language community' programs of SBS radio that is played every hour before each language program.
- 10 An exception to this void is Stuart Cunningham & John Sinclair eds, *Floating Lives: The Media and the Asian Diaspora*, (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2000).
- 11 D. Dayan, 'Particularistic Media and Diasporic Communities', in T. Liebes & J. Curran eds, *Media, Ritual and Identity*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1998: 103-113) p. 103.
- 12 Dayan, 'Particularistic Media', p. 110.
- 13 James Clifford, *Routes, Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997) p. 251.
- 14 *Ethnic program grants* are available to stations based on the number of hours of non-English programming broadcast. Broadly speaking, a fundable program must: 1) be in a language mainly other than English; 2) contain no more than 50% music content; 3) have a spoken word content of no more than 25% religious material or references; 4) be produced under the auspices of a recognised local ethnic community language group; 5) be locally produced; and, 6) be broadcast between 6 a.m. and midnight. (<http://www.cbf.com.au>)
- 15 I. Whitford, 'Public Radio: The Promise and the Performance', in *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1992: 53-59.
- 16 The majority of these migrants and refugees are Chileans and El Salvadoreans but there are also smaller groups of Latin Americans from other countries such as Peru, Uruguay and Colombia. Most Latin Americans arrived in Australia during the 70s and 80s as refugees or under the Humanitarian Program, as well as on family reunion visas. According to the *Settlement Data Bulletin*, from November 1997 there were 3148 Spanish-speaking people in South Australia at that time.
- 17 One of the interesting aspects of what is often called 'long-distance nationalism' is exactly the way in which physical 'distance' disappears and 'is becoming of minor relevance in modern nationalist struggles', (Z. Skrbiš, *Long Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and*

- Identities* (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 1999) p. 3.
- 18 P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, (London: Polity Press, 1982) p. 212.
- 19 C. Pirard, 'The Nueva Canción in Latin America', in *International Social Science Journal: Makings of Music*, vol. 34, no. 4, 1982: 599–623, p. 612.
- 20 The Chilean 'new song' developed its own underground distribution mechanism that escaped censorship under the repressive Pinochet regime, and became a symbol of the political struggle against corrupt and murderous regimes across Latin America, (P.L. Manuel, *Popular Musics of the non-Western World: An Introductory Survey*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 7.
- 21 G. Hage, 'At Home in the Entrails of the West: Multiculturalism: "Ethnic Food" and Migrant Home-Building', in Helen Grace et al. eds, *Home/World: Space, Community and Marginality in Sydney's West*, (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1997: 99–153) p. 108.
- 22 Hage, 'At Home in the Entrails', p. 107.
- 23 E. Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, (New York: Routledge, 1996) p. 37.
- 24 For a fascinating historical and personal account of this collective trauma, see A. Dorfman, *Heading South Looking North: A Bilingual Journey*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998).
- 25 For an English version of Allende's last words, see E. Galeano, *Century of the Wind*, Part three of the trilogy *Memory of Fire*, (London: Minerva, 1989).
- 26 Hage, 'At Home in the Entrails', p. 107.
- 27 According to the questionnaire distributed at various social activities, such as fiestas and soccer matches, they found that 84% of listeners were Salvadoreans and the others consisted of Latin Americans of other nationalities. Such data is, of course, partial because the sample was very small and not representative.
- 28 E. Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p. 214.
- 29 K. Ram, 'Dancing The Past Into Life: The *Rasa, Nrnta* and *Raga* of Immigrant Existence', in *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* Special Issue 12, vol. 11, no. 3, 2000: 261–273, p. 262.
- 30 Such a *pupusiada* would normally take place after the program at a private house of a Salvadorean family which operated as a restaurant, where they prepared and sold *pupusas*, the Salvadorean national food.
- 31 In the questionnaire mentioned above, for the question: 'What kind of music do you think that the program should play more or less of?', the following categorisations were used: '*Rancheras que dan cólera, Románticas, Tangos, Cúmbia, Música viejita, Tríos, Merengue, Vallenato, Rumba, Rock en Español, Otra*'.
- 32 Hage, 'At Home in the Entrails', p. 106.