

# Present Tense

A Journal of Rhetoric in Society

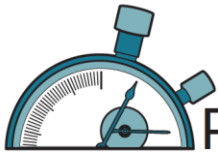
## Humanitarian and Democratic Consequences at the Intersection of Economic Globalization and Rhetorical Strategy: Extending the Conversation on SB 1070

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## Humanitarian and Democratic Consequences at the Intersection of Economic Globalization and Rhetorical Strategy: Extending the Conversation on SB 1070

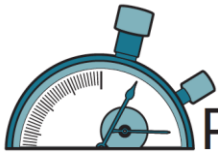
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There are quite a few points on which we agree with [Cruz Medina and Aja Y. Martinez's response](#) to [our original essay](#). Most importantly is that SB 1070 was an inhumane bill that contributed to the continued criminalization of people of color. However, we do find that the essays diverge on their *political* focus. Our essay delineated the influence of economic globalization on electoral politics in which bills like SB 1070 are created and approved and the negative consequences they have on U.S. democracy. Medina and Martinez focused on the "micro-context of the lived experiences of the people framed by this ultraconservative rhetoric reified into law" and offered Martinez's experience to attest to the negative effects SB 1070 has on the lived realities of people of color in Arizona. Their analysis articulated a humanitarian politics.

Ultimately, we view the two essays as complementary elements of "the given circumstances of capitalist society as the foundation of and constraint upon the process of social change" (Cloud 56). We argue that if the goal of such scholarship is to find ways to change the conditions that erode democracy and exploit and oppress people of color then we must assess the tensions and contradictions in the unfortunate reality that SB 1070 was both inhumane and an effective rhetorical/political tool.

Indeed, the acute effect of SB 1070 is the impact it has on people of color who are racially profiled and live in fear of law enforcement agents emboldened to terrorize them while committing the "crime" of working. Such was the case for Noemi Romero who had finally saved the money to hire a lawyer to process her case under President Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. She was arrested in a workplace raid, forced to use her savings to bail herself out of jail, and disqualified from the DACA process because she now has a felony on her record (Khan). Romero's, like Martinez's, story contributes to a body of narratives that articulate the consequences of legislation on real people. Stories like these are gut wrenching and need to be shared.

Why then should we also study the effective use of inhumane legislation? We argue that an account of the conditions of economic globalization is a vital component (not to exclude other forces involved) of the way laws are created to maintain inhumane law enforcement practices, and helps explain an important aspect of *how* brown and black bodies are criminalized. In our original essay, we argued that including economic globalization as a key feature of the "given situation" helped explain how a bill that seemed blatantly unconstitutional could be used as an effective rhetorical strategy. In this essay, we will extend our analysis to other elements of the



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controversy influenced by economic globalization: the boycott of Arizona and the drafting of SB 1070.

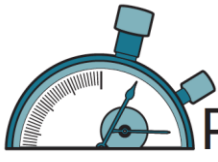
## Boycotts in the Age of Globalization

In addition to other political action around the United States, some called for a general boycott of Arizona. Boycotts are a historically important and increasingly popular way for average citizens to engage the political process through their spending habits to “transform not only economic conditions, but also ethical and moral or political ones” (Pezzullo 129). Despite their popularity, waging a successful boycott, especially in the context of economic globalization, is difficult. In her analysis of the boycott of the Mitsubishi Corporation, Phaedra C. Pezzullo argued that the boycotters’ claim of success was partial at best because “multi-national and expansive corporations . . . seem to be able to escape accountability through their scale and organizational structure” (131). In other words, boycotting a multi-national corporation is difficult because they are only accountable to their own bottom line and have the ability to shift resources to weather economic challenges.

In the case of the boycott of Arizona in response to the passage of SB 1070, the situation was more complex than the boycott of Mitsubishi that Pezzullo described because in addition to the context of economic globalization, boycotting was an indirect means to pressure politicians and because those same politicians are beholden to multinational corporations for contributions and in-state investment. Moreover, the boycott of Arizona in response to SB 1070 faced additional challenges because of the increased political support Gov. Jan Brewer garnered after signing SB 1070 (Smith). Given

these conditions, it is not surprising that the boycott did not force a repeal of SB 1070.<sup>1</sup> An economic analysis of the boycott of Arizona in response to SB 1070 reveals the complexity of that economic/political response. The “Stop the Conference: The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Conference Cancellations Due to Arizona’s S.B. 1070” study found that Arizona had lost \$141 million in revenues and \$45 million in hotel industry (Fitz & Kelley). However, data compiled by hotel industry research firm STR showed that in 2010 “for the state of Arizona, hotel occupancy was up 5.7 percent in May and up 8.3 percent in June compared with the same time a year ago” (“Arizona Hotels”). Moreover, an Associated Press article reported that while some businesses experienced disruption, others reported an increase in sales (Christie). In 2013, the Phoenix Convention Center cited the boycotts as a possible contributing factor to its slumping fill rates (Gardiner). However, in the first half of 2014 the convention center reported that it was hosting 10 more conventions than the previous year during the same time period and projected spending to be approximately 224.6 million, up from 142.5 million the year before (Vo). Fans, players, activists, and columnists called on Major League Baseball to cancel the 2011 All-Star game, but the game was still played in Phoenix and none of the players or managers boycotted the game. Arizona also hosted the National Football League’s Super Bowl game in 2015.

The analyses described above have tended to focus on particular segments of Arizona’s economy and do not account for the larger economic conditions of Arizona post-SB 1070. By most measures, Arizona has proved a profitable state post-SB 1070—especially considering Arizona’s Gross State Product (GSP). GSP is significant because it measures the sum



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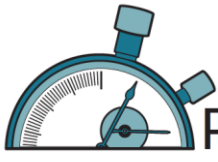
of the products originating in all the industries in the state. In 2009, prior to SB 1070, Arizona's GSP was \$243 billion. The GSP increased in each of the subsequent years, increasing by roughly \$2 billion in 2010 (\$245 billion), \$6 billion in 2011 (\$251 billion), \$8 billion in 2012 (\$259 billion), and \$2 billion in 2013 (\$261 billion) (Arizona Commerce Authority).<sup>2</sup> That means that from 2009 to 2013, the GSP of Arizona not only increased each year, but it had also grown by roughly \$18 billion over that period of time. Analyzing both the specific and the general economic impact of the boycott of Arizona reveals the difficulty of exerting enough economic pressure to secure a political end. Part of the difficulty stems from the conditions of economic globalization. The reach of multinational corporations extends beyond Arizona, which allows them to "ease up" when local "tensions" arise like during the Arizona boycott—they'll take their concerts and conventions elsewhere for the time being (e.g., artist Pitbull cancelled his show in Arizona in 2010 because of the boycott, then went on to promote Walmart in an advertising campaign, and then returned to Arizona after the Supreme Court decision on SB 1070), and hedge against their losses with other entertainers in the meantime (e.g., Brooks & Dunn, Green Day, and the Vans Warped Tour continued with their concerts in 2010).<sup>3</sup>

This is not to say boycotts cannot or do not work. In fact, in 2014 Jan Brewer "caved to Big Business—a strong constituent-base with major clout in Arizona—over the religious right" when she vetoed [SB 1062](#) (Sakuma & Margolin). According to the text of the bill, the purpose of SB 1062 was to expand the individual right to free exercise of religion, defined as "the ability to act or refusal to act in a manner substantially motivated by a religious belief, whether or not

the exercise is compulsory or central to a larger systems of religious belief" to legal entities (1). Opponents of SB 1062 argued that it would give businesses the right to deny services to lesbians and gays (Shoichet and Abdullah). Passed by Arizona's legislature, Brewer vetoed SB 1062 arguing that the bill "could have unintended and negative consequences" (qtd. In Schoichet & Abdullah). Similarly, boycotts forced Indiana Governor Mike Pence to "clarify" Indiana's "Religious Freedom" law to ensure that it "doesn't give businesses the right to deny services to gays and lesbians" (Jones & Peters). What both instances have in common is that the threat of a boycott was enough to have a political impact. We might also venture the claim that, in these instances, the interests of big business were supported, whereas SB 1070 maintained the conditions for criminalization and exploitation of people that benefit some business interests rather than human interest.

## **Selling Laws: The Business of Undermining Democracy**

The influence of business in politics is not new, but SB 1070 represents more than business-as-usual in politics. In the past, businesses have tried to gain influence over the political process through campaign contributions, lobbying, etc. What has become increasingly popular are "model bills." Model bills are pre-written pieces of legislation that include talking points and extensive research (Hertel-Fernandez 583). In his analysis of the conditions under which lawmakers pass model bills, Alexander Hertel-Fernandez explained that resource-strapped lawmakers, and particularly pro-business lawmakers, are likely to propose model bills (595). In 2009, the "business-backed, conservative group" called the American Legislative Exchange Council claimed that of the



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826 bills it produced that were introduced, 115 were enacted (Hertel-Fernandez 582).

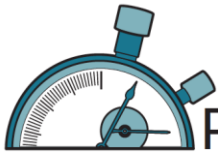
Based on available evidence, SB 1070 is not quite a model bill, but the CCA did have a hand in writing it. SB 1070 was also different because it became a campaign tool. In the midst of a boycott of Arizona, Jan Brewer went from having relatively no chance of being elected Governor until “SB 1070 happened,” to winning election to Governor. Before SB 1070, Brewer “struggled against a field of conservative challengers, but her tack to the right on immigration moved her to the head of the Republican pack” (Smith). Signing SB 1070 also improved her approval ratings against her gubernatorial opponent Terry Goddard (“Election 2010). She was elected and the state’s economy was recovering from recession. In this way, SB 1070 represents a unique threat to democracy because it reinforces conditions that do not actually benefit the vast majority of Arizonans or Americans, even though they may be ideologically pleasing to some people. These are the conditions that led Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page to argue that the United States is no longer a democracy because “economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while mass-based interest groups and average citizens have little or no independent influence” (565).

## Conclusion

Our analysis of the boycott of Arizona and the way an inhumane bill gets deployed as a rhetorical strategy demonstrates that economic globalization as an important factor in the maintenance and contestation of laws that significantly undermine the practice of democracy. The odds are daunting, but as Dana

L. Cloud reminds us, “change happens,” and we refuse to accept that resistance to these conditions is futile and maintain that an assessment of the given situation that includes the realities of economic globalization is necessary to generate strategies of resistance that maximize pressure on corporate and political institutions and minimize the negative effects such actions might have on vulnerable populations (68). In such an economic and political context, narratives shared “out of love” that invite readers and listeners to consider the immorality of criminalizing brown and black bodies whose lives are negatively affected by “the daily reverberations of political theater and quarterly earnings reports that support the rejection of culture, history, knowledge, and decades of work loyalty” are a necessary component in mobilizing dissent and enacting resistance (Medina & Martinez).

We believe equally important to strategies of resistance is an awareness of the role multinational corporations play in their strategic approach to investing in our political system by packaging pro-business legislation, supporting law makers who make budgets and pass bills like SB 1070, Sheriffs (also elected) who enforce those laws, and judges (also elected) who proceed over trials—all of which have a direct impact on the criminalization of brown and black bodies. This does not discount other strategies that would work in tandem to insert “ethical considerations into public discourse that concerns economic policies” that “diminish the value of human life” (Medina and Martinez). In concert, this work contributes to an effort to interpret the world in the context of economic globalization and racist ideologies for the purpose of changing it.<sup>4</sup>

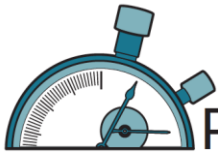


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## Endnotes

1. It is not our intent to suggest that boycotts only have instrumental ends. Calling for a boycott can serve the needs of a movement in a “legitimizing” function that can “lend positive authority” or a “regional and national presence to a budding movement” as well as an “in-gathering” function where a boycott becomes a part of a movement’s “power base,” or a “group of adherents ready to talk, march, and fight for the cause” (Stewart 154).
2. Data from other sources confirms a similar trend, and maybe even larger growth than the more conservative figures of the Arizona Commerce Authority. For example, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation reports the trend to be \$245 billion in 2009, \$249 billion in 2010, \$258 billion in 2011, \$271 billion in 2012, and \$279 billion in 2013 – thus, an increase in GSP each year, and an increase of \$30 billion over the time period. Available at <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/total-gross-state-product/#graph> (last accessed 4 September 2015).
3. For example, Pitbull is part of the Ultra record label, owned by the Sony Corporation. Brooks and Dunn is part of the Arista Nashville record label owned by Sony Music Entertainment, which is an American music corporation managed by Sony Corporation of America which is a subsidiary of the Japanese conglomerate Sony Corporation. One Sony artist cancels his show (Pitbull), while other Sony Artists (Brooks & Dunn) hedge against losses (and maybe turn a profit). Green Day is part of the Reprise Records record label owned by Warner Music Group that is operated by Warner Brothers Records. Vans is part of the
- VF Corporation (a global footwear and apparel company).
4. The final phrase is adapted from Marx’s observation in *Theses on Feuerbach*, where he wrote “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.” <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm> (last accessed 1 April 2015).



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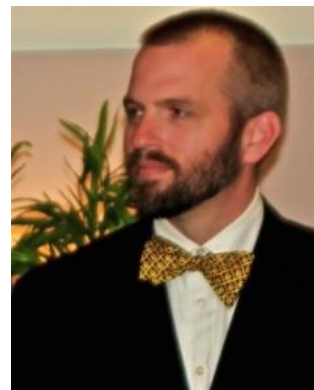
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