

EDITORS' COMMENTARY

“Con el corazón con razón en la mano”: Community Building, Collective Resistance, and Decolonizing Scholarship

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While finalizing the fall 2018 issue, we realized that it had been a year since our community—particularly our Puerto Rican, Central American, and Mexican immigrant *hermanas/xs/os*—suffered a series of life-changing *arrebatos*: the reprehensible negligence of the US government to provide immediate humanitarian relief to Puerto Rico in the wake of two of the most devastating hurricanes in the recent history of the island, and the rescission of DACA, threatening the lives of 800,000 young people who have called the United States their home. Over the past twelve months, we witnessed our *Boricua hermanas/xs/os* endure misery, living without basic necessities like food, drinking water, shelter, gas, medical care, electricity, and telecommunications, and suffering tremendous human loss as a result of post-hurricane conditions. Schools were ruined, leaving children without schools. Months after the hurricane, university students and faculty held classes in catastrophic conditions beyond anything many of us in the continental US have experienced—a testament to their collective strength and will to reconstruct their lives in the face of material destruction and fiscal crisis.

Meanwhile, our DACAmented community continues to live with the fear of deportation, waiting for the courts to reach a decision regarding the liminality of

their political status in this country. In support of this administration's push to end DACA, more than seven states, led by Texas, launched a federal legal suit to end DACA this past May. Civil rights organizations such as MALDEF responded by representing close to a dozen DACA recipients to defend deferred action.

In the midst of this legal battle, this administration unleashed one of the most severe and callous anti-immigrant measures, separating thousands of children from their families. Reminiscent of this country's centuries-old settler colonial practice of tearing Black and Indigenous families apart as a strategy of colonial warfare, in just a few months, federal government agencies had managed to rip away two thousand children from their families as part of this administration's "zero tolerance" anti-immigrant policy. Infants were taken to "tender age" shelters. Reports soon emerged about the mistreatment and dehumanization children experienced. While hundreds of migrant children have been reunited through court order, at the time of this printing, more than twelve thousand migrant children, mostly from Central America, continue to be detained in about a hundred federally contracted prisons.

As a collective of *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social* committed to social action and human rights, we protested the dehumanization of these immoral policies. We denounced the actions of this administration through our institutional and professional affiliations, writing op-eds, holding press conferences, and drafting public statements expressing our outrage and demands for justice. Members made calls to elected officials, helped organize phone banks to urge Congress to reach a bipartisan agreement on DACA, and joined grass-roots efforts to reunify families and effect justice for our asylum sisters and brothers. We leveraged our privilege as Chicana/Latina feminist activist scholars to awaken critical consciousness among our students and create a space of healing and hope in the classroom. As nepantlera scholars on the

threshold of many worlds, we merged our research and activist voices to produce scholarship that would unveil the madness of these injustices and advance our community's self-determination. Building on the legacy of our ancestors and the activist genealogy of MALCS, we reinforced our commitment to do “work that matters.”

The 34th annual MALCS Summer Institute held at the University of El Paso in August 2018 exemplified this conviction. It brought together nearly 350 women—the largest number of attendees in the Institute's history—resulting in over 275 *mujeres* presenting more than 90 panels, roundtables, workshops, or performances. Plenary speakers modeled the legacies of collective action and resolute fortitude celebrated during the Institute—evident in the powerful testimonios of renowned scholars like Emma Pérez, in the leadership of Rosalinda Guadalajara, governor of the Rarámuri community in Ciudad Juárez, and in the activism of Claudia Yoli Ferla, a DREAMer whose work educating undocumented communities led to her recent detention along the border. Honored guests included acclaimed Chicana author Ana Castillo and distinguished Chicana/Tejana feminist historian Antonia Castañeda, this year's recipient of the Tortuga Award. Together, these paragons of *mujeres* ostended the knowledge that Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous women manifest through their acts of reclamation, affirmation, discovery, and healing. Currently, the MALCS organization has a record number of over five hundred active members. Building community has been a stanchion for Chicanas and other women of color throughout history and this historic gathering and mobilization of a critical mass of Chicana/Latina/Indigenous women-identified scholars in the academia attests to the exigence for collective *convivencia y resistencia* during the current oppressive and dispiriting presidential regime.

In addition, this issue also features several examples of “work that matters.”

Borne out of the collaboration of five women of color scholars working at a state institution situated along the US-Mexico border, “Platicas-Testimonios: Practicing Methodological Borderlands for Solidarity and Resilience in Academia,” merges *plática* methodology (Fierros and Delgado Bernal, 2016) with *testimonio* to articulate a decolonial methodology and praxis that allows women of color scholars to *desahogar*, engage in *reflexión*, heal, and forge solidarity. Resisting the constraints of colonial, neo-liberal, and imperial ideologies that shape both borderlands and academia, the decolonial, revolutionary, and deliberate encounters these women pursued allowed them to name their pain, recognize shared trauma, identify strategies for countering oppression and injustice, as well as document and model this process in both private and public spaces of knowledge production.

We are also excited to feature the cultural studies scholarship of Norell Martínez. Her article “Indigenous Feminist Hip-Hop: Invoking the Maíz Diviner to Denounce Agribusiness in Mexico” offers an outstanding lyrical and visual analysis of Oaxacan hip-hop artist Mare Lirika Advertencia’s song “Mujer Maíz” and its accompanying music video. Martínez grounds her lyrical and visual analysis in Indigenous feminist concepts of *feminismo comunitario* and *territorio cuerpo* to elucidate how Indigenous women, as *mujeres maíz*, are central to the struggle against violence. As such, struggles against transgenic corn, agribusiness, and neoliberal policies in Mexico must also include efforts to end violence against women who, like Earth, are sacred. Martínez’ exemplary analysis shows how *xip-xop* (Oaxacan hip-hop) serves as a powerful pedagogical intervention of Indigenous resistance and consciousness, while creating a much-needed hemispheric intellectual conversation on Indigenous epistemology, feminist hip-hop, and environmental and women’s rights as inseparable struggles in our praxis.

Concetta Bondi expande las interpretaciones de la imagen de La Malinche por medio de los personajes Malintzin Tenépal, en el ensayo “Malintzin Tenépal: A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective” (1977) de Adelaida R. Del Castillo y la Colibrí, en la novela *La canción del colibrí* (1996) de Graciela Limón, proponiendo así una reinterpretación de La Malinche como un nuevo símbolo de la consciencia e identidad chicana centrado en su agencia, resistencia e indigenidad. Al resaltar las grandes contribuciones de estas dos autoras y empleando el imaginario descolonizador de Emma Pérez, la conciencia diferencial de Chela Sandoval y el concepto del tercer espacio, Bondi ofrece un análisis de estas protagonistas que evidencia una descolonización de previas interpretaciones hegemónicas, reflejada particularmente en Huitzililín/La Colibrí quien, como la mujer chicana, rompe con sistemas patriarcales y coloniales de opresión por medio de su voz, cuerpo, sexualidad y espiritualidad indígena.

Co-authors Sylvia Mendoza Aviña and Socorro Morales fuse Black feminist theories with Chicana feminist epistemologies and methodologies to analyze the ways Chicana/o and Latina/o youth enact resistance through a ratchet sensibility, vernacular, and aesthetic. Working with brown youth attending a majority-Chicana/o and Latina/o school where they are taught by predominantly white teachers, Mendoza Aviña and Morales locate students’ resistive agency in expressions of ratchet behavior as this performance transgresses the notions of respectability and propriety ascribed in Eurocentric and colonial logics that always already marginalize brown bodies and identities.

Karen R. Roybal’s “Hidden Histories: Gendered and Settler Colonial Landscapes in Northern California” contributes to California’s history by writing the life of María Ygnacia López de Carrillo into the historical record. Known as “The Mother of Santa Rosa,” López de Carrillo was a member of the

early Mexicana/o families in northern California and maintained control of her family's land grant in a patriarchal dominated society. Roybal's outstanding historical research critically examines the ways in which López de Carrillo both resisted the patriarchal structures of the time, and interacted with the Southern Pomo indigenous peoples, thus revealing a hidden gendered settler colonial narrative that complicates the history of conquest in the region. Roybal's article joins the growing body of groundbreaking Chicana feminist scholarship on Mexican women's resistance to patriarchy during the Mexican colonial period.

For the first time, , the Creative Writing section of *Chicana/Latina Studies* features graphic text created by two multiply-positioned women artists. Through a series of five images, PhD student Fatima van Hattum documents through image and prose the uncertainty and doubt marginalized doctoral students often experience when grappling with lofty theoretical ideas. Tejana artist Anel Flores offers images of a queer Chicana adolescent who questions rigid gender identities while exploring her own desires and fears. One image of note is an homage to Chicana, Latina, Indigenous, lesbian, queer, and gender-nonconforming artists.

The four books reviewed in issue include an anthology, an ethnography, a historical analysis using both court documents and literature, and a testimonial. Together, they provide a snapshot of the breadth of Chicana feminist scholarship. The review of Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs' *Rebozos de palabras: An Helena María Viramontes Critical Reader*, by Cristina Herrera, offers a Chicana feminist intersectional analysis of these collected works in literature. According to Erika Abad, *Don't Come Back* by Lina María Ferreira Cabeza-Vanegas is a memoir rife with multi-layered tales interlacing experiences of diaspora, belonging, and immigration policies across the Americas, with critical reflections of light-skinned privilege, class privilege,

and caste systems that create access points for education and social mobility for the author. In her review of Karen R. Roybal's *Archives of Dispossession: Recovering the Testimonios of Mexican American Herederas, 1848–1960*, Myrriah Gómez appreciates Roybal's unconventional analysis of both literary works written by Mexican American women and legal archives of land grant cases involving female plaintiffs to complicate the way Spanish/Mexican women were involved in land adjudication processes. Glenda M. Flores documents the findings from her ethnographic study of Latina elementary school teachers in California in *Latina Teachers: Creating Careers and Guarding Culture*. Reviewer Ana K. Soltero finds both a value and a need for female teachers of color who act as “cultural guardians” because of the way they center the cultural capital of their brown students and challenge deficit-based ideologies about their educability—a perspective sorely needed today.

This issue also features the breathtaking work of legendary Tejana/Chicana visual artist Santa Barraza, whose work invokes Maya-nahua indigenous cosmology and offers a visual journey of the historical and contemporary experiences of mujeres living in the borderlands. Originally from Kingsville, Texas, Barraza lived in the Northeast and other parts of the US before returning to her hometown to surround herself with the “strength, memories, history, and folklore that [her mother] imparted to [her] to animate [her]” (Herrera-Sobek, 2000). Her work, which references mesoamerican motifs and invokes ancient goddesses like Coatlicue and Mayahuel, honors strong iconic and real women in her life. Imagery of the South Texas landscape serves as a symbol of their strength and resilience in the borderlands where her Karankawa and Mexican ancestors have lived for generations. This issue features pieces from her “Mujeres Nobles” series, as well as other renowned works.

In closing, we want to point out the significance of the title for this commentary. The quote is drawn from Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s essay “Let Us Be the Healing of the Wound: The Coyolxauhqui Imperative—la sombra y el sueño,” (2016) where she writes on the power of community-building in transforming our world:

Changing the thoughts and ideas we live by and their limiting beliefs will enable us to extend our hand to others con el corazón con razón en la mano. Individually and collectively, we share strategies on peaceful coexistence y desparamar (spread) conocimientos. Each of us can make a difference. By bringing psychological understanding and using spiritual approaches in political activism we can stop the destruction of our moral, compassionate humanity. Empowered, we’ll be motivated to organize, achieve justice, and begin to heal the world (20–21).

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