

## EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

### Continuamos with the Healing of our Wounds

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In August of 2018, MALCSistas gathered in El Paso for the 34th annual MALCS Summer Institute. It was the largest assembly ever for the organization and its first time along la frontera, drawing Chicanas/xs and Latinas/xs to the literal and metaphorical borderlands that fashion much of their lived experiences. Indeed, because the city epitomizes the bilingual, bicultural, transnational, and indigenous cultures and histories MALCS centers and celebrates in its yearly meeting, it was an ideal meeting space that nurtured the bodies, minds, and spirits of participants. It was a horrendous *arrebato*, then, when the city that replenished so many MALCSistas last year was the target of anti-Mexican white supremacy and anti-immigrant xenophobia on August 3, 2019. A space that offered so much love, healing, and *convivencia* precisely because of its proud *mezcla* of Tejano, indio, Mexicana/o, America, English y español, has been characterized as a threat by the highest office in this country for over two years now, resulting in this atrocity. The act that took the lives of 23 people and wounded another 24 is a clear expression of frighteningly normalized ideologies—ones that are often obfuscated as hate, ignorance, mental illness.

Audaciously, within days of nursing this grave wound, an equally heinous articulation of white nationalist ideology was orchestrated by 600 U.S. government agents—again at the behest of the current administration. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency apprehended and deported 680 undocumented poultry factory workers in the largest raid in U.S. history.

Notably, the employees at the four sites in Mississippi targeted had filed suits against their corporate employers, alleging serious labor violations including intimidation, physical and sexual harassment, and exploitation. The raids took place on the first day of school, leaving the school-aged children of those undocumented workers without a family to go home to after their first day of the new school year. While the tears and agony of these young Latinas/os/xs replayed in national news feed seared our already brutalized corazones, they also solidified the white nationalist clarion call that peoples of Latina/o and Indigenous descent are only desirable as exploitable labor, not as neighbors, schoolmates, or consumers, and should be purged from this nation.

As scholars of the borderlands, as teoristas of our own lives and bodies, we recognize the discourse used to denigrate, demoralize, and dehumanize our communities as reflections of Eurocentric, imperial, white supremacist, and colonial epistemologies that daily attempt to annihilate our ways of knowing, our tongues, and our very bodies. Nevertheless, this cognizance does not lessen the trauma these flagrant acts trigger. What happened on August 3 and August 7 nos asustó. It intensified our vulnerability. It amplified our otherness. It marked us as targets. Left reeling from such flagrant displays of anti-Latina/o/x racism, we must find solace in community, remind ourselves of our continued resilience, and resume acts of subversion. Importantly, we can seek guidance from Anzaldúa, who documented a similar anguish and resoluteness in her essay, “Let Us be the Healing of the Wound,” regarding the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001. As she notes in this autohistoria, the collective sorrow, pain, and fear these contemptible arrebatos render necessitates that we once again piece ourselves together—reassemble Coyolxauqui—both in word and in deed. At *Chicana/Latina Studies*, we offer both sabiduría and a Chicana imaginary as a way to suture our injuries, as they function to re-forged our bonds across indigenities and Latinidades and inspire us to rededicate

ourselves to the struggle against white supremacist fueled anti-Mexican and anti-Latino racism and all those who incite it.

The contributors to this issue, thus, can help mend our bodymindspirit by pointing to the continued dangers of various forms of cultural nationalism and rigid boundaries of “us” and “them.” Instead, these authors rejoice in the splendor of being multiply-positioned, unbound by rigid dichotomies, and ripe with the possibility of transformation.

For instance, in Inmaculada Lara-Bonilla’s article, “The Decolonial Phenomenology of Shifting: Writing Encounters in the Gloria E. Anzaldúa Archive,” the author recasts Gloria Anzaldúa’s theory of writing as a long-standing and foundational element of both her decolonial theory and her philosophical legacy. Lara-Bonilla argues that Anzaldúa’s earliest reflections on writing reveal that her later works were not a shift towards a “radical interconnectedness” but rather affirm “a sustained theoretical orientation” of decolonial phenomenology. Concepts like *conocimiento*, *nepantla*, and *la facultad* anchor a “methodology of *shifting*”—meaning-making processes that emerge during the writing process, as well as during moments of heightened conflict, when individuals can first imagine different positionalities and possibilities and then bring them into being in their worlds. This is a helpful reminder in such trying times.

The article, “Bruja, Curandera, y Lechuza: Collapsing Borders and Fusing Images,” by Amanda Ellis analyzes ire’ne lara silva’s short story “tecolotl,” a fantastical tale of an owl-woman who comes to embrace her multiple selves. By unhinging the false dichotomy between a curandera and a bruja that have traction in Chicana/o literature and popular discourse, Ellis considers how lara silva uses the character of half-owl/half human Paloma to instead

“emphasize the fluidity of identity, and the power of radical transformation” (p. X). In addition, Ellis deftly illustrates how the mezcla of genre, symbolism, and magical realism in this stirring story captures the multiple facets of a Chicana identity, ultimately celebrating this complexity as a source of strength and power—a much-needed affirmation of our fortitude.

Challenging limiting categories of identity is also evident in the essay, “The Double Life: Respectability Politics and Spatial Formation in Femicide Films,” by Stevie Ruiz. His compelling analysis of documentaries and docudramas about the femicide of over 1,500 women in Ciudad Juárez reveals oppositional narratives that reinforce the problematic “virgin-whore” dichotomy that continue to plague Chicanas and Latinas. Although activist mothers seek justice for their daughters by disrupting the pervasive discourse of both law enforcement and entertainment films that characterize their daughters as deviant women complicit in eliciting the violence that befell them, Ruiz interrogates the way the mother’s voice in the docudramas can be read as reinforcing a virgin-whore dichotomy for all women. Placing Chicana feminist scholarship and work by feminist geographers in conversation with each other allows Ruiz to map out the constraining logics of the simplistic extremes that not only frame the filmic representation of the Juárez feminicides, but also restrict understandings of public and private space for Chicanas and Latinas. Ruiz’s analysis of the ways in which discourses about racial and gender identities inform spatial politics offers a useful touchstone for interrogating sadistic acts that work to impede—if not eradicate—a Latina/o and Chicana/o presence.

Strategically resisting such cruelty is the focal point of Theresa Torres’ article, “Transformational Resistant Leadership in Kansas City: A Study of Chicana Activism.” A case study of the leadership style of Chicana activist

Rita Valenciano allows Torres to draw on transformational resistance (Delgado Bernal 1997) and mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa 1987) to conceptualize transformational resistant leadership. Torres argues that because Valenciano was equipped with a critical consciousness, a commitment to social justice, and the ability to maneuver within dominant and marginal spaces, discourses, and ideologies, she was able to build coalitions between Kansas City's U.S.-based Latina/o community, new immigrant Latinas/os, African American leaders, and Jewish leaders to oppose the appointment of an anti-immigrant and anti-Latina/o municipal board member. Torres also maps out the challenges faced by leaders who pursue social transformation by seeking solidarity, creating coalitions, and maneuvering in and around binary thinking, as they often endure personal sacrifice and simultaneously experience the oppression they struggle to overcome. Torres' work is both a source of inspiration and a cautionary tale about how to navigate and thwart machinations of nativism, misogyny, and whiteness.

Together, these four articles illuminate the hazards of fixed and inflexible categories of identity for Chicanas, while also celebrating the promise of both personal and societal growth and transformation.

They are paired with the first-ever themed creative writing and book review sections, which are devoted to Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x young adult and children's literature. Two out of the five authors published in this issue's Creative Writing section have ties to El Paso and their prose aptly depicts spaces, worlds, and ways of being that embrace the intersectionality, resilience, and intergenerational trauma that characterize the might of Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x communities. When read in concert with each other, these pages impart the promise and hope that young generations of Latinas/os/xs and Chicanas/os/xs will indeed find themselves recognized, represented, and

respected.

In discussing representation and inclusion, it is apt to acknowledge that a significant milestone was reached with the 2019 MALCS Summer Institute, as it was the first time the organization's annual gathering was held on the east coast. This site provided a much-anticipated opportunity to connect with and honor the indigenous peoples on the northeastern region of Turtle Island, as well as our Puerto Rican, Dominican, and other Caribbean-based mujeres and mujer-identified communities. Uniting 150 women in *convivencia*, the program with over 30 panels, roundtables, workshops, performances, and two plenaries was bookended by a spontaneous dance-fueled opening reception and closing ceremony. The range of *Latinidades* represented in the program offered up rich conversations about *Salvadoreñas/os/xs* in diaspora, Puerto Rican and Dominican mobilization for affordable housing, Afro-Latinidad, Puerto Rican literature, anti-blackness in Latina/o/x communities, and the challenges of being Latina/x in higher education along the East Coast. Long-time MALCSista Seline Szkupinski Quiroga was honored with this year's Tortuga Award for her invaluable dedication and service to the organization, which includes creating MALCS' online presence and cultivating the new generation of MALCSistas by consistently facilitating the attendance of a good number of students to the Summer Institute each year. The efforts to share space and build solidarity with our hermanas Boricuas was especially prescient this summer, as Puerto Rico demonstrated so handedly what mobilization and unity can accomplish. As an organization of mujeres activas, the acts of resistance by Puerto Riqueños towards corrupt, authoritarian, sexist, and homophobic leaders, and colonial and imperialist rule should galvanize our membership and journal readers towards collective remedios and salves that can start to heal our many wounds.