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Promoting Curriculum of *Orgullo*: Latinx's Children's Books and *Testimonio*

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Abstract

As educators that are committed to democratic liberatory education for all, we are called to create spaces and places where we can cultivate and curate experiences that can provide avenues for students to develop self-awareness and agency. These dialogical spaces and places will problematize and question students' knowledge and understanding leading them to articulate perspectives inhibited by hidden curriculum that hinders them from developing and actualizing a sense of self and purpose. This essay provides an example of decolonizing curriculum through children's literature to support students in exploring, analyzing, and creating testimonies as a way to problematize their understandings and experiences with marginalized communities. *Testimonio*, embodied in the aesthetics of children's literature, provides a pivotal pedagogical tool that allows students to critically reflect on systematic oppression, social inequalities, and hegemonic practices. Framed within a curriculum of *orgullo* (Calderon-Berumen & O'Donald, 2017), the testimonies embedded in children's literature scaffolds the process of reading, producing, and analyzing students' personal narratives.

Keywords: *Testimonio*, Children's literature, curriculum of *orgullo*, students of color.

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Introduction

The sociopolitical and cultural climate in the U.S. has historically been contentious and plagued by divisive rhetoric, however, the 45th presidential election exacerbated these divisions through the president's overtly racist, sexist, and xenophobic discourses. In so doing, people from marginalized backgrounds have experienced alienation and vilification as the dominant discourse purposefully aims to silence counter ideologies. Hegemonic rhetoric trickles down to educational settings and manifests as attempts to erase cultural knowledge and ways of being experienced by marginalized communities. This nullification of *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2003) has become pervasive and rampant. We have personally witnessed and experienced this abuse through our lived experiences as teachers of color navigating this narrative with our focus on schools.

As educators that promote and support democratic education, we believe it is our responsibility to create opportunities for students and provide spaces within the classrooms to critically (re)(de)construct the self and make sense of the world in which we live. We consider these opportunities as a third-space (Bhabha, 1994; Anzaldúa, 1987) where students can feel free to ponder, seek meaning, and better understand their realities, where they learn to read the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 2005). We also believe that divergent ways of knowing and being are repressed by a hidden curriculum (De Lissovoy, 2012; Valenzuela, 2010; Yosso, 2002) that deprives students, especially students of color, of opportunities to develop a clear sense of self and purpose. Therefore, these spaces must allow students to articulate their own interpretation and understanding of their realities in association with the sociopolitical climate they are navigating. We envision the creation of such spaces that can anchor students' personal, familial, and communal experiences and cultural knowledge as they develop agency to question, analyze, and evaluate the repercussions and capabilities of their experiences. Anzaldúa (1987) writes, "Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the 'real' world unless it first happens in the images in our heads" (p. 109). Alongside, we recognize and value the power of narrative as a catalyst to ignite the process of self-actualization and understanding as the narrator reflects on the lived experiences. Anzaldúa (2009) tells us:

By writing I put order in the world, give it a handle so I can grasp it... I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about

me, about you. To become more intimate with myself and you...The danger in writing is not fusing our personal experiences and world view with the social reality we live in, with our inner life, our history, our economics, and our vision. (p. 30-31)

We affirm that voicing and documenting what fuels and informs a person's curriculum of *orgullo* (Calderon-Berumen & O'Donald, 2017, p. 36) nourishes the opportunity for contestation and resistance fueling a space where a counter-narrative emerges and denounces the vilification and hyper-surveillance of people of color. Therefore, a curriculum of *orgullo* is foundational to a person's agency and praxis. Our vision of curriculum of *orgullo* is one that merges the multiplicity and intersectionality of the lived experiences in such a way that incites an understanding of the self. This new understanding fights reductionist hegemonic rhetoric that aim to simplify and categorize a person's place in the world. Within these alternative spaces for expression and examination, assumptions and stereotypes can be challenged and (re)(de)constructed making new perspectives, approaches, and alternatives. This essay invites educators to use children's literature as a way to incite students to reflect and produce their own stories as counter-narratives. Examining and writing their experiences, students will have the opportunity to read the world whilst unfolding a curriculum of *orgullo* and developing experiential knowledge. In this essay, we propose and present what we believe can be positively introduced in the classroom to incite a curriculum of *orgullo* through *testimonio*. First, we introduce our positionalities as Latina feminist educators, then we present some of the crucial definitions of the theoretical notions that frame our proposal. Second, we present three specific examples of children's literature that could be used as tools to elicit student's narratives, and we conclude with an analysis of some implications and considerations.

Our Positionalities and Theoretical Definitions

We consider crucial to include our own positionalities to clarify our approach to this project. We are both from Mexican descent. Karla came to the U.S. in the middle of her high school journey, while Freyca arrived in the U.S. well into her professional and educational career as a graduate student. While our experiences do differ, given our age and education level at the time we migrated to the U.S., our emotional wellbeing and needs related as we shared and traversed similar perplexing situations, both as Latinas in the U.S., and as doctoral students. We have spent the last decade studying, working, and practicing the implications of racialized stereotypes of Latinas/os in U.S.-based notions of curriculum and pedagogy. We use

qualitative inquiry approaches and draw upon Chicana feminist epistemologies to guide our personal and professional decisions. We are greatly influenced by the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, and although we don't teach about her explicitly, her work is foundational to our teaching praxis with pre-service teachers.

Given our positionalities and our identities as immigrants, Latinas, bilingual and multicultural teachers, scholars, and mothers in academia, we are passionately committed to support efforts in education, curriculum, and pedagogy that contribute to raise consciousness of students of color as knowledge constructors and active participants of their societies with voice and agency. Our training and experience as educators, and our own lived experiences as immigrant transnational students in the U.S., propel us to promote teaching strategies endorsing the creation and implementation of a curriculum of *orgullo* in conjunction with the power of narrative through *testimonio*. In addition to providing our positionalities and interest in this project, we also use this introduction to define key terms used in our approach.

Decolonizing Pedagogy

U.S. schools' demographics have overwhelmingly shifted from a homogeneous population to one that consists of students from distinct backgrounds, multiple socio and economical status, and diverse cultures (NCES, 2017). The social condition of the U.S. is defined by Buttaro (2010) as colonial because "there continues to be a structured relationship of cultural, political, and economic domination and subordination between Europeans and indigenous non-white peoples" (p. 7). She further argues that this situation permeates social institutions like schools that "serve primarily the interests of a dominant White, English speaking, and Christian population" (p. 7). The curriculum that is perversely enacted today, decontextualizes and dismisses the experiences, needs, and goals of diverse students that make-up a current classroom in the United States (Buttaro, 2010; Martin, Pirbhai-Ilich, & Pete, 2017; Valenzuela, 2019). As other scholars have suggested before (Halagao, 2010; Martin et al., 2017; Sachs et.al., 2017), we advocate for a transformation in approaching, creating, and implementing curriculum within a decolonial framework. We call for the construction and employment of a curriculum that supports, shelters, fosters the experiences and enhances possibilities for students of color while simultaneously problematizes and questions the privileges and advantages of those in charge of educational spaces through decolonizing pedagogy.

A decolonizing pedagogy is about empowering students by helping them find useful ways to think and discuss their experiences and co-creating ways of resistance (Wilson, 2005) and resilience. Halagao (2010) indicates that “decolonization is the process of humanizing the dehumanized” (p. 497). Since it is a process, we use the term decolonizing to highlight its ongoing practice and implementation that deserves and requires constant and continuous effort, emotional labor, and support. Implementing a decolonizing pedagogy demands teachers to believe in their students’ potential and have high expectations for them. Buchanan (2013) indicates that decolonizing work is complex and at times produces cognitive dissonance that consequently creates feelings of uncertainty and detachment from our reality. To understand and make sense of these uncomfortable feelings, a revision of our own beliefs and ways of being is necessary as they juxtapose with the dominant discourse. This reflective process necessitates a transitional space that will allow the process of deconstructing and reinventing the self to flourish (Grande, 2007). Thus, a decolonizing pedagogy also entails accessibility to liminal space(s), not only to encourage students to examine their lived experiences, but also to nurture the learning experience as teachers support their contemplation and the creation of their *testimonio*. Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin’s (2013) words helps us clarify and solidify our stand, as they indicate:

Experience in our world is grounded in a relational in-between space where we attend to the multiple dimensions of looking backward and forward, inward and outward, and pay attention to places simultaneously as spaces of being, becoming, and possibility. (p. 582)

Testimonio is not a new tool for decolonization since there are scholars that have been advocating for a dramatic changes and implementation of a liberatory curriculum (i.e. Academia Cuauhtli in Austin, Precious Knowledge in the Mexican American Studies in Arizona, or Adelante, a university-school-community partnership project in Utah) in schools that is comparable to the way we envision (Nieto, 1994, 2009; Sleeter, 2008; Valenzuela, 2010). Although these previous efforts have not been identified as decolonizing pedagogies, in and of itself, we dare to characterize them as such since they aim to decenter colonial traditions within the curriculum. In other words, they propose the implementation of curriculum as dynamic praxis that involves and embodies decolonizing theory and pedagogy. Such decolonizing theories and methodologies allow possibilities of teaching practices that provide

students with opportunities to critically reflect on their realities, while simultaneously equipping them with the necessary intellectual tools to deconstruct and analyze them. What is highlighted here, as Martin et al. (2017) pointed out, is the focus on the Other, which enables teachers to face their privilege and own biases, and reflect on how to address the systemic and structural inequalities to better serve students of color. Also, it includes the potential to (re)cover forgotten and voided experiences and knowledge that can lead to new ways of knowing and being in the world filled with hope and healing (Bone, 2008; Jolly, 2011).

In doing so, we propose to foster narratives through *testimonio*, as it includes emancipatory characteristics offering the possibility of healing an individuals' quandaries within a supportive community. Spear (2014) underlines, "the act of writing trauma narratives holds healing potential for the authors" (p. 59), and we believe that with *testimonio* this also spills over to potential readers and witness to these narratives. Spear (2014) suggests to not pay too much attention to the accuracy or veracity of the story, but to focus on the writing and healing aspect since it is a process of "re-creating the self, reestablishing the subject into a new identity, a transformed self" (p. 66). Furthermore, she states that it is imperative to assist individuals in their transformative process because of its emotional and psychological impact. Transformation and change is uncomfortable but by providing the necessary support, it can be easier and rewarding for all those involved in the process.

Testimonio

Testimonio is a personal narrative written in first person and may entail individual or collective experiences of marginalization. Situated as decolonizing theory and methodology, *testimonio* is a narrative tool that promotes the expression of alternate ways of knowing and being (Latina Feminist Group, 2001). The process of creating *testimonio* facilitates the (re)(de)construction of personal experiences. This process may result emancipatory, particularly for alienated individuals, by telling and exposing a divergent position embedded in his/herstories (Anzaldúa, 2009). However, for some individuals this could be intimidating given the harsh situations they are facing or have faced, so they may refrain from using it because their stories are difficult to (re)tell and (re)live due to its painful or traumatic details.

Moreover, *testimonio* offers unique characteristics that facilitate the difficult process of telling complex and complicated stories. Jupp, Calderon-Berumen, and O'Donald (2017) in analyzing the various dimensions of *testimonio*, offered a possibility to use *testimonio* in a

fictionalized manner in order to protect the *testimoniante* and/or the writer as he/she detaches from the story. Fictionalized *testimonios* assumes underlying eyewitness accounts (Jupp et al., 2017) and generates a fictional work drenched in the lived experience of the narrator, the person giving the *testimonio* or his/her community. These fictionalized narratives can be used as helpful tools to implement as early as the elementary level because students are capable of narrating their first-hand experiences either in written form or through drawings (Stevenson & Beck, 2017). *Testimonio* can be advantageous and easier to implement in middle and high school classrooms as students dabble in making sense of their experiences while supporting and developing their creative and imaginative writing abilities.

As a result, we view *testimonio* as a pivotal pedagogical tool that allows a person to critically reflect on systematic oppression due to social, economic, political, cultural, linguistic, and other sources of inequalities that are embedded in a hegemonic dominant rhetoric. As a pedagogical tool, when using *testimonio* in classrooms or for educational purposes, it may also be helpful as means of resistance and as source of self-empowerment and self-affirmation. An important component of the decolonizing pedagogy, according to Martin et al. (2017) is critical interculturality, which requires “the creation of spaces for interaction and dialogue” (p. 239) and acknowledging that it is not a linear and tidy process, rather one that obliges teachers to enact caring. Framed within a curriculum of *orgullo* (Calderon-Berumen & O'Donald, 2017), we encourage the use of children's literature to entice and elicit students' fictional *testimonios* based on their own lived-experiences, and in that way, implementing *testimonio* as decolonizing pedagogy.

To present a sliver of these efforts, we draw from the work of Mariana Souto-Manning (2009) and her efforts to implement a liberatory pedagogy in the elementary classroom. Souto-Manning and a group of nineteen first graders, read texts from the civil rights movement in order to analyze the pull-out educational programs implemented in U.S. schools and to understand their segregated nature from a critical lens. Souto-Manning's (2009) goal was to expose students to the divisive tactics that such programs produce in the culture of a classroom and of school. She utilized children's textbooks in order to interrogate, “multiple viewpoints, making differences visible, examining competing narratives and writing counter narratives to dominant discourses” (Souto-Manning, 2009, p. 52). Souto-Manning (2009) asserts that “children's literature can serve as enabler of culturally responsive pedagogy” (p.

52), and stimulate dialogue that can produce the desire for contestation to relevant issues addressed by the materials in combination to students' life experiences. Inspired by Comber's (2003) work, Souto-Manning's (2009) investigation seeks "to engage with local realities, mobilize students' knowledges, practices, and experiences to examine how power is exercised and by whom" (p.53).

Similarly, the work of Alma Stevenson and Scott Beck (Beck, Stevenson, & Fink, 2015; Stevenson & Beck, 2017) advances the implementation of culturally relevant children's literature during a summer literacy program. In their project, students read culturally relevant migrancy-themed books (Jaramillo, 2008; Jiménez, 1999; Muñoz Ryan, 2007) and they view pieces of the documentary *The Harvest*. These resources were meant to connect closely to the students' lived experiences as migrant adolescents and begin the process of "conscientization" of the value and importance of their stories. Beck, Stevenson, and Fink (2015) assert: "an essential element in implementing this curriculum is a tight alignment between the lived experiences of students and the literature they will be reading" (p. 66). The authors were guided by Ladson-Billings' (1995) conceptualization of culturally relevant pedagogy, in that: "1) Students must experience academic success; 2) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and 3) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 160). Under these tenets, the rest of the summer program focused on students' production of storyboards that form an anthology of their migration journeys.

While the efforts mentioned above are not defined as *testimonios* per se, we contend that within a decolonizing pedagogy framework, *testimonio* is a narrative tool that will provide opportunities of creating counter-narratives with the capability to describe and understand differing ways of knowing, being, and doing (McGregor, 2012). These *testimonios* will then have the potential to unmask the manifold ways students of color have experienced dominance or oppression.

The creation of *testimonio* by students in elementary grades is also not a new enterprise in education since it has already been implemented and explored before. For instance, take a look at the work of Saavedra (2011) in which she used *testimonio* in her third-grade classroom in order to empower students to investigate, create, and claim "*nuevas posibilidades*" (p. 265) of knowing and being in the world. Another example comes from DeNicolo, González, Morales,

and Romaní (2015), who used a children's book, *La Mariposa* (Jiménez, 2000), to spark a group of third graders' *testimonios*. These *testimonios* explored the cultural wealth the students had acquired and developed during their bilingual education experience. *Testimonio*, in both of these investigations, served as an effective pedagogical tool and an avenue for self-affirmation and validation. The work of Fránquiz, Avila, and Ayala Lewis (2013) does not centrally deal with the use of *testimonio* in the classroom, but accrues the stories of two teachers and their students as they explored Gloria Anzaldúa's children's books that we suggest and recommend as primary sources for the creation of *testimonios*. Fránquiz, Avila, and Ayala Lewis (2013), capture the dynamic interaction between the teacher's personal experiences and professional teaching approaches utilizing Anzaldúa's children's books, and the impact these texts make in their classrooms and in their students' reflective process. Their work highlights the importance of alternative ways of knowledge-making and producing through Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of *Nepantla* and proves the versatility and importance of her work.

We applaud all of these efforts and qualify them as key examples to the possibilities that *testimonio* has to offer. Still, we propose a combination of these enquiries and would like to witness the creation of *testimonio* by young people that explores the complexity of the self within the intersectionality of political, social, economic, cultural, and linguistic factors. Situating this work within a decolonizing aesthetic framework (Mignolo, 2012), we present three literary examples that can support the development of a decolonizing pedagogic tool grounded in a curriculum of *orgullo*. We argue that utilizing children's books as resources, teachers might incite the creation of children's *testimonios*, as personal narratives, founded on their own lived experiences as students of color living in the U.S. in this critical time.

Eliciting Fictionalized Testimonios Through Children's Stories

We present three examples of children's books that could be used while implementing a curriculum of *orgullo* and eliciting students' fictionalized testimonies. Our first two sources come from Gloria Anzaldúa, who authored two children's books (Anzaldúa, 1993, 2013) in which she shared her *testimonio* as a child growing up in a small town at the US-Mexico border. In these works, Anzaldúa was not only able to reiterate her theories, personal experiences, and views on living in the borderlands, but she used children's literature to reach another group of readers and offer a foundational example for young potential *testimoniantes*.

Her first book, *Friends from the other side* (Anzaldúa, 1993), provides a glimpse of the perils that undocumented children might experience. The protagonist of the story is *Prietita*, a Mexican American girl living in a small town in South Texas. She meets Joaquin, a young immigrant boy from Mexico who comes to her house to sell wood. *Prietita* wants to help Joaquin. She wishes to heal his sore arms that are bruise and filled with cuts because he must chop and carry the wood he sells around town. *Prietita* stands up for him when a group of Mexican American boys call Joaquin a “*mojado*” (a wetback). Anzaldúa through *Prietita*, describes the poverty in which undocumented immigrants live in the border when *Prietita* goes to visit the shack Joaquin lives in with his mother and sees the meager state of the dwelling. Anzaldúa also describes the kindness and loving relationship people have with one another regardless of their miserable conditions when *Prietita* visits Joaquin’s house and his mother offers her a meal knowing that there was not enough even for one person. Joaquin and *Prietita* become good friends, and one day “*la migra*” (immigration border patrol) shows up and searches for “*ilegales*” (undocumented people). *Prietita* and *la curandera* (the woman healer) help Joaquin and his mother by allowing them to hide from *la migra* under *la curandera*’s bed. After *la migra* leaves, *la curandera* tells *Prietita* that she now can help her heal Joaquin’s arms with the herbs. Helping and learning from the *curandera* is a great honor that *Prietita* receives as reward for her good deeds and kind character.

This story touches multiple topics such as immigration status, friendship, bullying, marginalization, poverty, indigenous ways of living and healing, among others. As discussed above, it shows the deplorable and marginalized conditions in which many people live near the border and similar migratory places. It narrates the fear and stress caused by being undocumented and the support that individuals living under these conditions receive from friends, neighbors, and family within their communities. The story presents the courage necessary to believe and value others’ good character and help them while they are being persecuted. Discussing the intricacy of these topics in a way that challenges students’ prejudices and misconceptions can be a difficult task, but it is essential within decolonizing pedagogies (Martin et al., 2017). As educators that identify deeply with these issues, we must embark in complicated conversation (Pinar, 2004) that avoid further victimization of these marginalized groups. Every student regardless of their race, cultural background, gender, nationality, or any other label and category, must be provoked and critically supported in the

process of deconstructing unquestioned views and positions. As Sachs et al. (2017) affirms: “it is imperative that educators find ways to provide experiences that challenge the status quo and its debilitating historical legacies” (p. 74), as a condition to move from deficit theorizing towards working on decolonizing their ways of being and doing (Martin et al., 2017). As teachers, and with the help of the text, we must nurture the relationship students are developing with themselves as they emerge as knowledge constructors, and highlight the potential, necessity, and support that marginalized individuals bring to the progress and growth of our communities and our communal knowledge.

The second book, *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* (Anzalua, 2013), shares alternative ways of knowing embedded in ancient traditions. The story begins with the sad news that *Prietita's* mother was ill. *Prietita* asked Doña Lola, *la curandera*, for a remedy to help cure her. Doña Lola is able to help *Prietita's* mother, but she is missing a specific herb that can only be found in the Rancho King which is a dangerous place because they shoot trespassers. *Prietita* decides to go into the ranch and gets lost in her search. *Prietita* follows the white tail deer, the salamander, the dove, and the lightning bug's advice that leads her deeper and deeper into the woods. In a meadow by a lagoon, *Prietita* encounters a ghost woman. *Prietita* has heard stories about *La Llorona*, a woman that steals children's but instead of harming her, this woman helps *Prietita* find the plant she needs and leads her back home.

This story connects the ancient myth of *La Llorona* and presents an alternative view of this character by giving it positive characteristics and virtues provoking the reader to question previous assumptions towards this legend. Also, nature and its inhabitants help *Prietita* with the herbs that are needed to cure her mother. Therefore, nature is a source of knowledge that is dismissed and devalued but *Prietita*, again with an open mind and kind intentions, is able to tap into its wisdom and resources.

Finally, Pam Muñoz Ryan (2000) in her work, *Esperanza Rising*, provides a different perspective of living within the borderlands. In this story, Esperanza and her mother are displaced from their comfortable home in Mexico after her father's death. Esperanza's mom, without much choice, makes the decision to go to the United States to start anew. Esperanza narrates the difficult experience of crossing the border and becoming field workers. Neither Esperanza nor her mother thought that they would ever do such work since they were well to do back in Mexico. Esperanza describes the strenuous backbreaking work that it takes to

harvest the fruits and vegetables. Still, she finds beauty in the process and cherishes and respects the work done by her and all the other field hands. Esperanza learns much about nature while working on the fields and is amazed at the knowledge that others like her have about how nature and life are interconnected. Esperanza witnesses the unjust treatment of the field hands by the growers and unites with them in order to receive fair pay and treatment. Field workers from different farms and different cultural backgrounds organized a strike to pressure the growers for better wages and living conditions. Surrounded by all of these events, Esperanza can feel herself becoming a new. She was transforming into a strong young woman that was willing to stand with others against inequality and that found refuge and wisdom in the knowledge that nature provided. Esperanza had finally let go of many issues that trapped her in a place of despair and was learning to live in a place filled with possibility and hope that changed continuously like the seasons. Muñoz Ryan, much like Anzaldúa, uses her life experiences and projects them into Esperanza's story. Muñoz Ryan presents the perils that field workers must manage but in spite of all, they still are able to live fruitful and happy lives as they become agents of change within their communities.

In spite of not being classified as *testimonio* literature, the books included here present the features of fictionalized *testimonio* (Jupp et al., 2017), as Anzaldúa (1993, 2013) and Muñoz Ryan (2002) portrait their personal experiences in the pages of these books enabling them to tell herstories (Anzaldúa, 2009). The authors provide resources for pre- and in-service teachers to use examples of *testimonio* as decolonizing pedagogy and integrate and compare them with mainstream curriculum. We argue that utilizing these books will incite students to share personal and/or familial stories linked to the topics discussed: immigration status, family, neighbors, community relations, security, social justice, fairness, (in)equality, ancient knowledge, and love (see Escamilla & Nathenson-Mejía, 2003; Jans-Thomas, 2009; López-Robertson, 2004; Osorio, 2008). Fictionalized *testimonios* have the potential to validate what the individual knows and exalts the opportunity to imagine future possibilities. Anzaldúa (2015) writes: "The creative process is an agency of transformation" (p. 35), and by proposing and creating a place and space for our students to imagine, be creative, and reflect on their personal experiences through their narratives, we are transforming the world. We, as teachers, are providing students with safe and brave spaces and places in which they can (re)(co)create new possibilities and realities.

Implications and Further Considerations

Using *testimonio* as a tool to foster the development of a curriculum of *orgullo* (Calderon-Berumen & O'Donald, 2017) and as decolonizing pedagogy entails multiple complexed and layered implications. First of all, it requires an acknowledgment of its advantages while validating its educational value. This means that an open recognition to legitimize students' lived experiences as resources of knowledge is essential. This validation disrupts canonical curriculum and decolonizes mainstream pedagogical practices based on book knowledge. Rather, creating their own counter-narratives through *testimonio* offers students an opportunity to critically reflect and analyze on their border-crossing experiences, develop agency, and validate the power of their voice. With this practice, students can search for ways to engage their realities and consequently affect change as social reality through praxis (Freire, 1967/2000).

Another implication involved when utilizing, applying, and supporting decolonizing pedagogies denotes a personal review of the educator's values and beliefs towards the colonial/decolonial binary, teaching philosophy, views of education, notions of cultural identity, and stereotypes. This is an important condition since, as we mentioned before, classrooms in the U.S. continue to increase their diversity while 80% of the teaching force is still comprised by white teachers (NCES, 2017). It is imperative that teachers and educators revise their positionalities and be prepared to embrace conversations that might emerge as a result of engaging in decolonizing pedagogies. Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, and Martin (2017) argue that teachers from dominant cultural groups must be prepared to examine their own biases and challenge their stereotypes in order to better serve students from diverse and marginalized groups. We recognize that many non-Latinx teachers might not feel equipped to implement this approach. Jolly (2011) reminds us that teachers are guided to create and maintain classrooms as "safe spaces," and in order to do so, sometimes difficult topics are avoided. Betancourth, Gautreaux, and Ross (2016) invite teachers to address such topics through children's literature, reiterating that young students are capable of understanding complex and problematic issues and willing to discuss them with teachers and other adults. They incite teachers to try such pedagogical approach since "teachers cannot be completely free if their students are not free" (Betancourth, Gautreaux, & Ross, 2016, p.51). We encourage all teachers and educators to provide students of color with opportunities to express their experiential knowledge through

narratives/*testimonios*, since the use of stories has proved to be an excellent tool in education, as Anderson and Mack (2019) affirm:

Stories assist with reaffirming our lives and experiences, helping us connect with our internal selves and others. In telling a story, we try to make sense of life, and stories of adversity can help make sense of, and give meaning to, difficult and confusing life circumstances. (p. 45)

A third implication involves teacher preparation, production of materials and resources, and creation of learning communities for those teachers, students, parents, and community members to discuss ways to work with the challenges this kind of work encounters. Undoubtedly, we are going to face resistance from many stakeholders. We must expect and be prepared for some criticism since any change that disrupts and questions the status quo will be distrusted. Still, we must not let that discourage us from the potential benefits and positive results of these emancipatory and liberating approaches to the education of our students as they re-create their selves through their writings.

Regardless of the hurdles, we believe that this work is valuable since it presents opportunities for self-awareness and empowerment that our students desperately need in these divisive times. Teachers can provide healing opportunities to those who live disrupted lives. This is ambitious laborious work, but it is one that can help all involved attain a democratic freeing educational experience. As potential resources, we offer a list (see appendix) of other possible books that can become part of a liberatory curriculum based on *orgullo* and can entice the production of *testimonios*. As educators, we should strive in our search of pedagogical tools to endorse and reinforce the practice of decolonizing pedagogies in our classrooms.

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Appendix

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