



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 18 Issue 1

2024

AMAE Open Issue

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ISSN: 2377-9187

Transformative Education: Review of *Teaching Gloria E. Anzaldúa*
Cantú-Sánchez, M., de León-Zepeda, C., & Cantú, N. E. (2020). *Teaching*
Gloria E. Anzaldúa: Pedagogy and practice for our classrooms and
communities. The University of Arizona Press. Pp. 341. ISBN- 13: 978-
0816541140. Paperback: 30

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The anthology, *Teaching Gloria E. Anzaldúa: Pedagogy and Practice for our Classrooms and Communities*, keeps Anzaldúa's work alive and relevant across disciplines. With three overarching sections—Curriculum Design, Pedagogy and Praxis, and Decolonizing Pedagogies—the 19 chapters highlight how educators like me can implement her work into their classrooms and communities and offer ideas on how to teach Anzaldúa across disciplines. Personally, I was first introduced to teaching from a Chicana feminist epistemology through Gloria E. Anzaldúa. Several of her writings invited me to reflect on my positionality as a scholar-activist-*maestra*. She provided me with language and teaching practices that honored my *antepasados* and inner child. Anzaldúa guides me day in and day out as a scholar-activist-*maestra*.

Part I of the book examines curriculum design, including poetry and storytelling. For Anzaldúa, envisioning the relationship between teachers and students meant that educators provide space(s) to engage with our higher-level consciousness about identity, our role as change makers, and social justice. The value of this section lies in the

invitation to courageously reimagine traditional tools—that at best support the regulatory features of schooling—as a means of brokering the promise of education being transformative not just for the student, but for the teacher as well.

One of the strengths of this book is the beautiful and powerful collection of lesson plans and educator reflections. It is inspiring to see the different ways teaching Gloria Anzaldúa encourages educators to reshape and reimagine the relationship between teacher and student. Through the lesson plans, the reader can grasp how to implement art and poetry into the classroom as a way to disrupt coloniality and imperialism. Furthermore, these lesson plans also foster a community of educators who infuse Anzaldúan thought into every part of teaching and learning. For me it was powerful to read how they navigated both the opportunities and challenges associated with developing a classroom as a decolonial space.

Part II of the book focuses on pedagogy and praxis. The chapters highlight ways educators make space for healing and decolonial thinking. The contributors elaborate that through Anzaldúa, they are able to conceptualize and practice a pedagogical praxis that is transformative. Candace de Leon-Zepeda calls this space *third space* classrooms, which are classrooms and curriculum that “allow for the visibility of one’s gender, race, culture, or class” (Cantu-Sanchez et al., 2020, p. 115). Moreover, the pedagogical work in this section is an invitation to imagine a different education, one that (a) approaches research from a trauma-informed perspective, (b) reminds us of the healing properties in teaching, (c) centers student agency, and (d) cultivates different forms of *conocimientos*. *Teaching Gloria Anzaldúa* is about paving the way for students to experience multiple forms of awakenings. In her introduction to Part II, de Leon-Zepeda

explains, “Anzaldúa provides language and practical ways to rethink traditional pedagogy and praxis in order to see the whole student” (Cantu-Sanchez et al., 2020, p. 119).

Lastly, in Part III of the book the contributors focus on how educators navigate the development of the classroom as a decolonial space. In these “Acts of Healing” chapters, educators share detailed ways to introduce the concept of healing and assignments that promote theorizing our lived experiences.

It is difficult to reflect on just one aspect of Anzaldúa's lived experiences and pedagogical offerings that I hold close. However, as it relates to teaching, one thing I carry with me is the general message that the act of teaching is, in itself, a healing practice. As a first-generation scholar-activist-maestra, I am still healing from my own experiences growing up as an immigrant in this country, and all of that comes up when I teach. I am grateful to have been introduced to Anzaldúa in graduate school because her work invited me and essentially gave me permission to heal alongside my students and *colegas*. Healing alone is the standard, but through her work, I am reminded that healing can also be communal.

To do this, I have my students write and think-pair-share, but the most impactful assignment I had was the *auto-hxstoria* project, a writing and art presentation that has students think about moments in their lives that connect to Chicana Studies hxstory. This assignment urges them to think critically about labels and identity, hxstory, and the ways folks navigate physical and imaginary borders based on the sometimes imposed and traumatic labels and identities placed on them by sociopolitical events. I am learning that both the students and I are constantly relating, reflecting, and healing from generational trauma. Moreover, I noticed that the inner work done through the *auto-hxstoria*

assignment encourages students to engage in different forms of activism and provides guideposts for reconnecting with themselves and their antepasados. I am grateful for Anzaldúa's reflections and frameworks, as they helped me conceptualize who I am as a Chicana scholar-activist-maestra and provided teaching tools to work alongside them to figure out how to navigate this world.

Given the density of decolonizing the classroom space, there is certainly room to continue to explore how to use Gloria Anzaldúa's work as a guide. To match the momentum of the three sections, there is a strong need for the last part of the book to dedicate chapters to the critiques and complexities of Anzaldúa's work on indigeneity and decolonial thought across disciplines. Perhaps the new edition can also include chapters on how educators responded to challenges and/or opportunities that came up in their development and implementation of decolonial and anti-colonial curriculum. Other chapters could also include responses from students on their experience in the class and how their understanding of decolonial and anti-colonial curriculum grew. Such chapters could incite a conversation on using anti-colonial and/or decolonial approaches to curriculum development and pedagogical praxis. Lastly, it would be important to make room for educators to make sense of teaching Anzaldúa in the midst of the pandemic. This book undoubtedly leaves the reader wanting more. Overall, the book is a powerful reminder of the legacy of Gloria Anzaldúa on educators across space and time.