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AMAE Special Double Issue, Part 2

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

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Introduction (Special Double Issue Introduction Part II)

The Origins of the Muxerista Thought and Consciousness

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Special Double Issue Introduction Part II

The Origins of the Jotería-Muxerista Thought and Consciousness

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Figure 1.

Raza Womyn de UCLA at an anti-police brutality protest, Los Angeles, 2001



Raza Womyn de UCLA

From 1999 to 2004, I became a member of Raza Womyn de UCLA, a Chicana/Latina student organization at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Raza Womyn were engaged in on- and off-campus intersectional activism, popular education, art and cultural production, and liberation struggle, including, but not limited to, anti-racism, anti-police brutality, women's rights, labor rights, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and Queer rights, and immigrant rights. My first encounter with the organization was their 4th annual Chicana/Latina conference in 1999. I witnessed these women building life-saving and transformative spaces, and I wrote my dissertation about everything I learned from them.

Figure 2 & 3

Raza Women's 1999 4th Annual conference program, Los Angeles, CA.

welcome

On behalf of *Raza Women de UCLA*, we would like to welcome you in celebrating our Fourth Annual Chicana/Latina conference honoring International Women's Day. This day holds significant meaning to us. It reminds us of the struggles and connections *mujeres* of color have in common. Often times we are misrepresented and placed in positions where we oppose each other instead of creating solidarity between us. That is why we feel it is important that we develop a strong dialogue with ourselves and other *mujeres*, and collectively challenge those obstacles that continue to marginalize our experiences. We feel it is necessary to create a conference which aims to raise consciousness, create dialogue, build solidarity, and provide a safe space for all *mujeres* in attendance.

This years theme is, *"El Fuego de Nuestro Espiritu Continua la Llama de Revolucion Colectiva"* (*The Fire in Our Spirit Continues the Flame of Collective Revolution*). It represents our internal passion, the ability to motivate ourselves and create change. It is the fire that burns within us to destroy the many "isms," such as sexism, racism, homophobia, and classism, that attempt to dismantle our communities.

The theme also tries to embody the way we look into the face of ourselves to see the reflections of those that continue to carry on the revolution. Our sisters, mothers, great grandmothers, the neighbor across the street, the women at the bus stop and the women half way across the world, all carry on the tradition of struggle of economic, political, and social justice. We hope our speakers and workshops facilitate the deconstruction of assumptions about ourselves and others, in order to organize against them and continue the flame of collective revolution.

In solidarity,
Raza Women de UCLA

agenda

time	event	location
8:00a - 8:50a	Registration/Registracion	Moore 100
8:50a - 9:00a	Welcome/Bienvenidas	Moore 100
9:00a - 9:30a	Opening Performance: Wozani	Moore 100
9:30a - 9:40a	Introduction of the Keynote Speaker/ Primera Oradora-	Moore 100
9:40a - 10:05a	Cherrie Moraga	Moore 100
10:05a - 10:10a	Announcements/Anuncios	Moore 100
10:10a - 10:20a	Break to Workshops/ Pausa a Talleres	Kerckhoff Hall Ackerman Union Boelter & Math Sci
10:20a - 11:25a	Workshops/Talleres I	" "
11:30a - 11:40a	Break	" "
11:40a - 12:45p	Workshops/Talleres II	" "
12:45p - 2:10p	Lunch/Comida Feria de Informacion/DJ	Court of Sciences
2:10p - 2:25p	Break for Dialogue	" "
2:25p - 3:20p	Dialogo	Court of Sciences
3:25p - 3:35p	Break to Closing Session	Moore 100
3:40p - 3:55p	Spoken Word: DeeLo	Moore 100
3:55p - 4:00p	Introduction of the Performer Closing Speaker/La Oradora Final -	Moore 100
4:00p - 4:30p	Monica Palacios	Moore 100
4:35p - 5:00p	Quetzal	Moore 100
5:00p - 5:10p		

Figure 2 shows the conference welcome page and the agenda of the day, highlighting a keynote by Queer Chicana feminist Cherrie Moraga; workshops and dialogues; performances by Wozani, a Black women performance group, and D'Lo, a queer & trans Sri Lankan-American actor, writer, comic, and cultural worker; closing speaker, Chicana feminist lesbian comedian Monica Palacios; and a closing performance by Grammy award-winning band, Quetzal. The leading vocalist is Chicana feminist activist and scholar, Martha Gonzalez. Fewer than 10 undergraduate women organized the conference that year. I was struck by how powerful and visionary they were.

I was also drawn to Raza Womyn by their call for a "collective revolution" and their intersectional approach to organizing community towards this end. This was the first organization I witnessed putting intersectional feminism into practice; many claim they do, but few actually achieve the goal of being truly intersectional in their social justice efforts. In June 1999, I interviewed delia,¹ the first member of Raza Womyn I met, who warmly welcomed me to the space as if I were family. She said,

¹ delia does not capitalize her name as an act of resistance to academic expectations.

“Revolution to me means change, speaking out, recognizing the injustices that exist...Many times, we forget about the mutual respect and the equality that must exist between each other. To me, revolution looks at the big issues, but it also looks at the individuals. Many times, the mujeres are forgotten, and we are oppressed. Re-constructing revolution means we won't put up with that anymore. We will educate ourselves and educate as many people as we can.” (delia, 1999)

Another member, Paula, said, “When women put their heads together, and their minds, bodies, and spirits, it's not about winning the revolution, it's about living it.” (1999). Thus, A Muxerista is one who re-constructs revolution, one step at a time, on a daily basis. The collective revolution they described and enacted is the root of my life commitment to Muxerista praxis. To this day, my research, teaching, leadership, even my parenting, healing, and relationship ethics are guided by what I learned from my mother, Raza Womyn, and all Muxeristas. According to Raza Womyn, Muxeristas are Fieras (untameable fierce womxn), Malinchistas, Mujeres Sin Pelo en la Lengua, Des-Caradas, Revolucionarias, Peleonas, Brujas, Healers, and Lovers. These identities were critically assessed and reclaimed as themes of their annual conferences.

Who Can Be a Muxerista?

Muxerista is a living term and identity initially coined by members of Raza Womyn de UCLA in 2002. Muxerista is an identity, pedagogical praxis, critical consciousness, and way of life. After one member traveled to Chiapas and met Indigenous women revolutionaries who identified as “Muxeristas,” we changed how we wrote “mujerista” because, as Angelica explained, Muxeristas better signified our connection to Mexico and our Indigeneity. I collaborated with Angelica and others to articulate a definition of the term. In 2004, I wrote, “Muxerista is an alteration of the word mujerista, which literally translates into womanist. A Muxerista is a woman-identified Chicana/Latina who considers herself a feminist or womanist. The ‘x’ replaces a ‘j’ to signify a connection to the ancestry and languages of Mexico and Latin America” (Revilla 2004, p. 82). Because the definition was rooted in activism and political action, I argued that a Muxerista was both a Chicana/Latina feminist *and* an activist. This definition underscores the importance of sustained political action that is always reaching beyond identity and theory. People who choose this term are intimately connected to a radical

activist identity.² They identify as both Muxeristas and radical activists, not one or the other. They are changemakers, committed to challenging all social injustice and creating spaces of safety or harm reduction. Some people who choose this identity do not embrace the term “feminism” because of the belief that the feminist movement has overwhelmingly marginalized the experiences of Chicanas/Latinas/xs and other people of color, and therefore choose to use an identity and philosophy that centers the experiences of their own communities, families, and selves. Drawing from Alice Walker’s (2007) powerful assertion that “Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender,” we use the term Muxerista instead of feminist because Muxerista is to feminist as red is to pink.

Figure 4

Las Vegas Muxerista Activists at an Immigrant Rights Action. (2013). Photo credit: Jose Manuel Santillana.



Subsequent research with feminist, queer, and immigrant rights activist communities in Las Vegas, Nevada, led me to expand the term to include people who do not identify as women but who embrace the political vision and values of Raza Womyn and Muxeristas. In 2010, I reframed the definition: “A *Muxerista* is a person whose identity is rooted in a Chicana/Latina

² I draw on Angela Davis’ definition of radical. She states, “Radical simply means ‘grasping things by the root’” (1990)

feminist vision for social change committed to ending all forms of oppression, including but not limited to racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, [ableism, ageism, imperialism,] and citizenism” (Revilla, 2010, p. 56). More recently, I co-authored an essay with Joanna Nuñez, Jose Manuel Santillana, and Sergio Gonzalez (2021) that continues in this spirit of expansion, reflecting lifelong commitments to healing, learning, and growth. In the essay, we write:

Muxerista is a non-binary, gender-fluid, gender-inclusive, trans, queer, [and] sexually-inclusive Chicanx [and] Latinx ... identity that honors... multiple, intersecting identities and communities while uplifting [our] radical commitment to activism, organizing, personal and collective liberation, and social transformation. (Revilla, et. al., 6)

We posit that a “Muxerista politic is embedded in [our] definition of Jotería identity/thought, and vice versa; a Jotería politic is embedded in Muxerista identity/thought” (Revilla et. al., 6). Muxeristas participate in and celebrate Chicanx/Latinx feminism and queer and trans Latinx and Chicanx political movements. The connection between Muxerista and Jotería identity and praxis is most evident in the work of the Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship (AJAAS), an organization I co-founded and co-chaired from 2011 to 2017, which was subsequently co-chaired by fellow Las Vegas Muxeristas Joanna Nuñez and Roberto Orozco. Las Vegas Muxeristas have served in leadership roles and been active members from the inception of AJAAS, including naming, mission, and vision development. Muxerista thought and praxis are embedded throughout AJAAS’ evolution, and fellow Jotería scholars (Hames-Garcia et al., 2014) practice a decolonial, women-of-color, feminista, or Muxerista approach in organizing, art, and scholarship. Furthermore, a Muxerista-Jotería praxis is at heart committed to building a Jotería (queer, trans, and gender expansive) homeland; sacred space-making; survival, healing, learning, and resistance; anti-coloniality; mind, body, land, and soul autonomy; re-imagining futures; eternal and generational love; queer sanctuaries and radical solidarities; futurity and kinship; pleasure and desire; love, refusal, memory, and world-making (AJAAS encuentro titles, 2007 through 2026).³ The members of AJAAS have enacted these goals over the past 19 years.

Muxerista Pedagogy

A Muxerista pedagogy (Revilla, 2004) necessitates an expansive, intersectional vision of social change that can be implemented and practiced as a way of life, filtering into activism,

³ See www.ajaas.com.

organizing, and educational institutions. This special issue is an homage to the over 25 years of this work, from Raza Womyn to multiple generations of Muxeristas from Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Minnesota, Sacramento, Chicago, Utah, and Tejas, including Deaf and Deafening Muxeristas and Jotería Muxeristas. I have come to understand these communities as a Muxerista diaspora. Many have left their hometowns, families, and communities to pursue education, organize, follow love, build careers, and create new communities, yet they remain linked to each other by vision and values. The Muxerista diaspora endures because of a shared expansive critical consciousness, an urgency to heal, the need for chosen family, a desire for humanization, freedom from harm, a demand for accountability, and radical love. I see the diaspora as networks of resistance, healing, spirit protection, and spirit restoration. Muxeristas have cultivated networks of care and femtorship that move across time and distance. Not all Muxerista relationships have sustained over time. We have endured partner and friendship breakups, betrayals, miscommunication, and simply outgrowing one another. At times, we have been able to repair the relationships. Othertimes, repair was not possible. Still, I believe that as some members leave muxerista collectives, they continue to grow their own jotería and muxerista values with family, new friends, and new collectives.

Figures 5 through 15, below, visually represent the Raza Womyn and Muxerista diaspora moving across the country. I graduated from UCLA in 2004, after 6 years of learning and growing with Raza Womyn. I started teaching at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and lived, organized, and taught there for 15 years, alongside fierce and fabulous Muxeristas and Jotería. Several of my students moved to Los Angeles and San Francisco, where they met and organized with Raza Womyn. Some became roommates and then eventually chosen familia. Two Raza Womyn went to the University of Minnesota to pursue a PhD in Feminist Studies and American Studies. Soon after, some of my former students and femtees arrived there to study in Social Work and Feminist Studies. They naturally found each other and nurtured a strong Muxerista community and chosen familia in Minneapolis. These kinds of connections have been forged in academic and activist communities across the country, with Muxerista consciousness, values, and praxis fueling the bonds. Knowing that we have a solid Muxerista foundation cultivates trust among us and nurtures our capacity to build community together.

Figure 5 & 6

May 1st action, Las Vegas (2015); NACCS Jotería Mixer, Minnesota (2018).



Figure 7 & 8

May 1st Action, Las Vegas (2017); Raza Womyn Meets Las Vegas (2019).



Figures 9 & 10

Jotería-Muxeristas at the Gloria Anzaldúa conference in Paris, France, connecting with immigrants from France and the UK who study Anzaldúa and resonate with Chicanx/Latinx feminist and borderlands theories (2019).



Figures 11 & 12

Three cohorts of Cal State LA Muxeristas at MALCS, UC Davis (2023). Cal State LA Muxeristas at Nuestra Graduation. Cal State LA (2024).



Figure 13

AJAAS Conference, “Jotería Pleasure: Re-Grounding Our Desires,” Plaza de la Raza, Los Angeles, CA (2024). This photo includes Raza Womyn, Las Vegas and Los Angeles Muxeristas, Jotería-Muxeristas from AJAAS, and other members of the organization.

**Figure 14**

Raza Womyn, delia, and their family are part of the land and healing justice movements in Puerto Rico. They live on land in Trujillo Alto that is part of the Fideicomiso para la Agroecología, a community Land Trust. Their collective, Somos Espejos (We Are Mirrors), stewards this ancestral land. They cultivate healing gardens, flowers, avocados, breadfruit, papaya, plantains, soursop, tamarind and coconuts, share cows with their neighbors, operate a community kitchen, and maintain a shared house for retreats, healing, and rest. (2025)



Figure 15

delia's family in Puerto Rico. (2025)



Figure 16

Jotería-Muxeristas in Puerto Rico, presenting on wealth reclamation, resource mobilizing, and Tool #4 as spirit protection from academic spirit murder. (2025)



Figure 17

Dyke Day LA. Three generations of Cal State LA Muxeristas and co-conspirators celebrating our Queerness and Jotería-Muxerista community (June 13, 2026).



Figure 18

Dyke Day LA. Ceremony welcoming a Muxerista into Jotería comunidad. (2026)



Special Double Issue: Part II

This collection of essays, testimonios, and poetry makes up the second issue of the special double issue, ***Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis: Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration (A Special Double Issue)***. This special issue traces the evolution of Muxerista thought from its origins in Raza Womyn through the development of Muxerista identity, Muxerista pedagogy, Jotería-Muxerista consciousness, spirit restoration, healing justice, and the Muxerista diaspora. The authors in this volume offer a collective vision grounded in spirit restoration, radical love, and the belief that change is possible. Through these writings, the Muxerista diaspora moves across homes, classrooms, stages, geographies, and communities. The authors teach us how to survive hardship and how to heal and flourish. The contributions to this volume demonstrate that Muxerista praxis goes beyond the classroom.

Zamara Cuyún's cover art perfectly portrays the intention of this special issue. "In *La Siembra*, a grandmother plants seeds, representing the women who cultivate and care for the seeds of resistance and resilience for generations to come." Likewise, Muxeristas and Jotería in this special issue are planting the seeds of healing and transformation, providing roadmaps for what is possible when we work together to create spaces of love, healing, and accountability.

We begin the special issue dancing with Rebecca Catzalco-Soria's grandmother, Clarita. Rebecca theorizes the act of *apapachadas* (treating someone with deep affection), which she

learned from Clarita. She argues that collective acts of care in the university can serve as a form of *apapachadas* that help us survive the violence of academic spirit murder. As Joanna Núñez shared in volume 1, our mothers and grandmothers paved the way for our Muxerista ways of being. Rebecca's grandmother and mother did the same. Josie Garcia and Olga Estrada honor their *Chola-Muxerista femtors*, profesoras who guided them through the university and helped them survive academic harms and navigate academia.

Several essays in this issue engage Muxerista pedagogies in the classroom. They call for shifts in traditional classroom settings. Nadia Zepeda writes about a Muxerista Healing Justice framework that can be implemented in the classroom. Drawing on her community work and research with Mujeres de Maiz, Zepeda outlines the work she did in her Healing Justice course. Diana Solis provides a step-by-step toolkit for conducting Muxerista Healing Circles in the classroom. Solis' research found that students often experience triggers and hopelessness when they are studying oppressive power relations in ethnic, gender, and sexuality classes. To address burnout and academic spirit murder, Solis offers Muxerista Healing Circles as interventions and support spaces for students. We then shift to Desiré Galvez's 2nd-grade Muxerista classroom. Their piece is a letter to educators inviting them into Muxerista and healing pedagogies beyond the university, and specifically in elementary school. Katherine Coronado's piece is a snapshot of Jotería-Muxerista world-making in the undergraduate classroom at Cal State LA. She outlines the values that guide her, and shows them in action in photographs. Next, Zeltzin-Nayeli Estrada-Rodríguez writes a beautiful ode to the *Radical Jotería-Muxerista Love in the Classroom*. She recalls early challenges in K-12 and ends by recounting the experiences of love, comfort, and healing she finally experiences in graduate school with Muxerista and Jota profesoras.

Osa Hidalgo de la Riva and Bianca Quintanilla take us into the family archives of Dr. Osa Bear, where she tells the story of her Tía Celia, an ancestor. Osa describes her Tía's pink suitcase full of photos, poems, and other artifacts as a Muxerista and Jotería classroom, a place where we can uncover the queer stories of our elders and ancestors, and they educate us about the jotería-muxeristas that came before us and planted the seeds for us to become who we are.

Cal State LA Profesora Leda Ramos shares her testimonio as a Central American educator, artist, and activist, as well as her 2025 keynote address at Nuestra Graduation. Raza

Womyn, Susana Cáceres, with whom I organized over 25 years ago, writes about her healing journey as a Central American Queer and Muxerista. Her piece, *I am Sacred*, is the story of finding her strength, coming out as queer, reconnecting to her Indigeneity, and refusing to hold on to harmful relationships. She suggests that Muxerista and Jotería educators use this performance as a discussion starter for difficult dialogues about healing and relationships. She implores us to “reclaim our power and sacredness.”

Veronica Garcia’s essay proposes that “wealth reclamation” can serve as the economic justice wing of the Jotería-Muxerista framework. She draws parallels between her work with ancestral healing, resource mobilizing, and Jotería-Muxerista values. Her essay is a powerful call for repair and a rejection of extractive, capitalist economies and acts of false generosity in philanthropy. Briceida Hernandez-Toledo writes a Muxerista research note from the depths of the dissertation-writing process, tracing the Muxerista lineage that shapes her approach to studying racial geographies within Las Vegas’ Latine community.

Flor Olivo, who was the first student scholar to engage with Muxerista theories in the field of communication, concludes volume 2 of this special issue with two poems, one of which is about forgiveness and self-restoration. The other is a job cover letter in which she wittingly reveals the invisible labor performed by women and mothers. Her poem points to the absurdity of patriarchy that invisibilizes women’s labor in our pursuit of careers.

Like the seeds in Zamara Cuyún’s art, these essays, poems, and performances promise the possibility of growth. When we nurture each other and provide networks of radical Muxerista-Jotería love, the possibilities for healing are tremendous.

We would like to give a special thank you to fellow Jotería-Muxerista scholar and managing editor of this special issue, Dr. Jerry Romero! Thanks also to Doctoras Ek and Sanchez for their support and this opportunity.

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