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Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

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***Muxerista Circles as Spirit Restoration: Healing Pedagogies in
Ethnic and Gender Studies***

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Abstract

This article examines how Muxerista Circles function as healing-centered pedagogical interventions within ethnic and gender studies classrooms. I draw on Muxerista Consciousness and Chicana feminist epistemology to explore how students and educators navigate academic spirit murder in higher education. Using a community-based participatory research approach, I facilitated a Muxerista Circle in a graduate ethnic studies seminar and conducted follow-up interviews with participants to examine their experiences. Participants described the Circle as a space that cultivated emotional release, collective care, and relational accountability within an academic environment that often reproduces racialized and gendered harm. Two reflections were generated from the Muxerista Circles that center Muxerista Healing Praxis and Community Building. These reflections demonstrate how intentionally facilitated healing spaces can support spirit restoration while strengthening feminist pedagogy in the classroom. I conclude by offering a Muxerista Circle Toolkit that translates these reflections into a practical framework educators can adapt to cultivate healing, reflection, and community within ethnic and gender studies courses.

Keywords: Muxerista Circles, healing, pedagogy, educators, participatory research

Introduction

Students and educators of color in ethnic and gender studies classrooms encounter a specific and devastating form of institutional harm: academic *spirit murder*. Revilla (2021) explicitly applies spirit murder—a concept that Williams (1991) originally developed—to educational settings where "racist, classist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, anti-immigrant, ableist, and/or ageist traumas are experienced" (p. 37). Moreover, Revilla (2021) explains that academic spirit murder destroys people's dreams and destroys "their very essence and desire to exist" (p. 37). Institutions of higher education structurally produce and reproduce academic spirit murder, including within ethnic and gender studies classrooms. Specifically, students of color enter these spaces carrying the weight of historical and contemporary harm inflicted on their communities, and many leave with new layers of violation. The current political climate intensifies this harm. Under the 47th¹ president, ICE raids terrorize neighborhoods, and leaders at the highest levels of government are normalizing anti-immigrant, racist, and ableist rhetoric. Students and educators of color committed to healing praxis must respond with urgency, love, and tools that meet students where they are.

As a Muxerista scholar-practitioner, I write from within this urgency because my experiences of academic spirit murder pushed me to develop healing-centered pedagogical interventions. Revilla (2022) defines a Muxerista as "a person whose identity is rooted in a Chicana/Latina/x feminist vision of social change committed to ending all forms of oppression" (p. 193). Therefore, Muxerista identity reflects a relational, embodied commitment to community accountability and social transformation. Within this context, I have encountered spirit murder in multiple forms, including patriarchy, classism, and ableism. These experiences threatened my sense of self and my love for education. Broader political conditions intensified this hardship. When the United States elected the 45th president in 2016, I was 22 years old and carrying an enormous weight without the tools, community, or language necessary to navigate a political climate that targeted and terrorized my community. That crisis marked a turning point in my relationship to education and activism. Academic spirit murder pushed me toward healing, and healing pushed me toward praxis.

¹ Similar to Revilla (2021), I choose not to use the 45th and 47th U.S. president's name, because his name and actions are triggering and harmful to many in my community. In this essay I refer to him as either 45 or 47, to signify each term of his terror..

Existing scholarship has theorized spirit murder (Williams, 1991), named academic spirit murder (Revilla, 2021), and developed Muxerista Consciousness as a framework for resistance and transformation (Revilla, 2022). Black and Chicana feminist scholars (Anzaldúa, 2005; Collins, 1996), alongside community healing traditions (Cariaga, 2018; Richardson, 2018), have each contributed critical tools for survival and resistance. However, the field lacks a structured pedagogical intervention that integrates these frameworks into a replicable healing praxis educators can bring directly into ethnic and gender studies classrooms (Richardson, 2018). While existing scholarship theorizes the wound (Anzaldúa & Moraga, 2015), the literature has not yet articulated a model for facilitating collective spirit restoration in the classroom.

Muxerista Circles address this gap as a structured pedagogical intervention that creates intentionally facilitated, non-hierarchical healing spaces grounded in Chicana/Latina feminist traditions and Muxerista Consciousness (Revilla, 2021). Designed to counter academic spirit murder, they center collective reflection, relational accountability, and spirit restoration for Students and educators of color navigating racialized, gendered, and ableist harm in ethnic and gender studies classrooms. I often visualize the Circle as a spiral, with the facilitator at the center and the healing practice extending outward to the community. This spiral reflects a pedagogy in which healing begins with the self and expands outward through shared reflection, care, and collective responsibility. Each Muxerista Circle develops in response to the particular participants, relationships, and contextual conditions that shape the space. Participants engage as knowledgeable contributors whose lived experiences function as critical sources of insight and reflection. Through this process, the circles operate as decolonial and anti-patriarchal spaces that center students' knowledge, agency, and healing goals. The circles also draw upon the principles of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2017), as the facilitator guides the process and supports collective dialogue, reflection, and meaning-making.

My development of this intervention emerged through lived experience and formalized qualitative research. I encountered spirit restoration through community healing circles as an undergraduate student. During one of these gatherings, I remember thinking: *Wouldn't it be amazing if this existed in my ethnic studies classes?* Nearly a decade later, I have facilitated multiple Muxerista Circles at California State, Los Angeles, while documenting student experiences and my role as a facilitator. As such, this research illuminated dynamics that resonated with my personal experiences: that Chicanx/a/o and Latinx/a/o students frequently encounter triggers

and feelings of trauma and vulnerability in gender and ethnic studies classrooms, and many participants reported spirit-murdering experiences inside and outside of the classroom. These reflections informed the development of a framework for Muxerista Circles as interventions against academic spirit murder, grounded in Muxerista pedagogy, theory, and praxis. Interview reflections further revealed that these circles can serve as spaces for spiritual restoration, particularly in ethnic and gender studies courses.

This essay extends that research by developing Muxerista Circles as a pedagogical intervention against academic spirit murder and by offering a practical toolkit for educators and facilitators to implement this work in their classrooms and communities.

In this essay, I trace how Muxerista Circles emerged as survival and resistance during moments when my community was being directly targeted and terrorized for me. Second, I situate the circles within existing scholarship and community healing traditions, including interview reflections. Third, I develop a framework for understanding Muxerista Circles as spirit restoration and Muxerista pedagogy in practice. Finally, I offer a practical toolkit for educators and facilitators to implement these circles in their own classrooms and communities.

Muxerista Consciousness

I draw on Muxerista Consciousness (Revilla, 2022) as the primary pedagogical and epistemological framework for this work. Muxerista Consciousness centers collective healing, spirit protection, and transformational resistance in response to institutional violence in higher education (Orozco & Williams, 2025; Revilla, 2022). Revilla's (2022) concept of Muxerista Consciousness encompasses the struggle against multiple systems of oppression, including racism, sexism, classism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia.

This framework informs how Muxerista Circles engage power, embodiment, and collective care within academic spaces. This research centers Chicanx/a/o and Latinx/a/o students and educators as critical sites of knowledge production. I recognize participants as whole and complex individuals whose lived experiences reflect intersecting systems of oppression within higher education. I center Chicanx/a/o and Latinx/a/o students and educators who navigate these intersecting forms of marginalization and uplift their lived experiences as essential forms of knowledge production.

Revilla's (2021) work on spirit murder provides a critical foundation for this intervention, as they document the brutal realities of spirit-murdering incidents experienced by

Chicanx/a/o and Latinx/a/o students in academic spaces. She reflects, “I have felt defeated, demoralized, and overall, racially battle-fatigued at work or school...These memories are coupled with physical and emotional exhaustion, anxiousness, sleepless nights, and persistent knots at the pit of my stomach, chest, and throat” (Revilla, 2021, p. 33). Revilla’s analysis underscores the need for interventions that address the structural and emotional harms experienced by BIPOC students. Therefore, the healing circles I practice draw on core Muxerista values, including critical consciousness, spirit protection and restoration, the creation of safer spaces, love and healing for self and community, and transformational resistance. I refer to this adaptation of healing circles as Muxerista Circles. Muxerista Circles create spaces for addressing the impacts of racial, class-based, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, and patriarchal trauma in ethnic and gender studies classrooms. These circles aim to confront the alienation, depletion, and racial battle fatigue (Smith, 2007) experienced by BIPOC students in academia. Thus, Muxerista Circles function as interventions against the toxic dynamics of academia by offering students opportunities to process, heal, and resist spirit-attacking and spirit-murdering ideologies.

Chicana and Black Feminism as Embodied Knowledge

Bernal's (1998) work on Chicanas as knowledge producers provides an epistemological foundation for centering lived experience and community-based knowledge in educational research. Bernal asserts that “Chicana students experience school from multiple dimensions, including their skin color, gender, class, and English-language proficiency” (p. 561), highlighting how knowledge emerges through embodied and situated experience. This perspective positions Chicanas not as objects of study but as holders of complex, multidimensional knowledge. Similarly, *Black Feminist Thought* (Collins, 1999) advances an epistemological framework that foregrounds lived experience, intersectionality, and collective knowledge production. As Collins (1999) asserts, “This approach promises to benefit the Black community as a collectivity because it models sensitivity to heterogeneity concerning not only gender but class, nationality, sexuality, and age” (p. 16). These traditions challenge research paradigms that privilege distance, neutrality, and objectivity and instead emphasize relational, community-based approaches to knowledge production (Deeb-Sossa, 2019).

Both Chicana feminist epistemology (Bernal, 1998) and *Black Feminist Thought* (Collins, 1999) emphasize the centrality of lived experience, community accountability, and intersectional

analysis in understanding educational inequality and resistance. These shared commitments also center healing, relationality, and collective care as necessary responses to structural violence in educational spaces. Grounded in these traditions, I position myself as a researcher and knowledge producer within the research process. By engaging my lived experience alongside participant testimonios, the values of “cultural fluency, ethical presence, and relational accountability” serve as methodological strengths (Harris, 2025, p. 1) that align with Muxerista Consciousness and community-centered research practices. Within this framework, healing circles emerge as communal practices that connect radical healing with the lived impacts of racial trauma, making them a critical site for examining resistance, knowledge production, and collective transformation in ethnic and gender studies classrooms.

Positionality

My understanding of research and knowledge production has been shaped by the guidance of my femtors—feminist mentors who modeled Muxerista praxis long before I had language to describe what they were doing. Their mentorship affirmed my lived experiences and helped me begin to name the harms I had been navigating. I came to recognize how *machista* and patriarchal ideologies had been internalized, and how naming those experiences could serve as an initial step toward healing and resistance. These teachings continue to influence how I approach research, shaping my understanding of knowledge as something that emerges through reflection, community, and shared experience.

As a self-identifying disabled Chicana, my engagement with research is informed by my lived experiences and the communities that have shaped me. These experiences guide how I interpret knowledge, pushing me to move beyond linear academic narratives and toward more expansive approaches that center relationality, healing, and collective liberation. Rather than viewing research as detached observation, I approach it as a process grounded in community knowledge and lived realities.

Scholars such as Bernal (2002) emphasize that students of color are both “holders and creators of knowledge, even though their histories, cultures, languages, and lived experiences are often devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings” (p. 106). Recognizing students of color as knowledge producers challenges dominant research paradigms and emphasizes the importance of centering their voices and experiences in scholarship.

Entering this research as someone who shares cultural and lived connections with participants shaped the relationships that developed throughout the creation and practice of Muxerista Circles. Participating alongside them in the Muxerista Circle activities allowed me to engage in the same processes of reflection and healing that were central to the project. Sharing aspects of my healing journey often mirrored participants' experiences, cultivating trust and creating space for collective dialogue. In these moments, knowledge did not emerge solely from observation but through shared reflection and community-based engagement.

Community-Based Participation Research

I use Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) as the guiding research approach. Deeb-Sossa (2019) describes CBPR as a collaborative research approach that involves community members as active partners throughout the research process and recognizes the distinct knowledge, experiences, and strengths that each participant brings. CBPR seeks to integrate knowledge production with social action to address community needs and challenge structural inequities. In this model, research often emerges from concerns identified within the community and prioritizes collaborative processes that value the expertise and lived experiences of all participants, particularly BIPOC students whose experiences reflect the emotional and structural impacts of academic spirit murder in higher education.

This approach fits this work because I belong to the community I engaged in Muxerista Circles with and co-produced knowledge with participants through shared reflection and relational accountability. The Muxerista Circle centers lived experience and *testimonios* and creates a non-hierarchical space where participants collectively generate meaning and engage in healing practices. Participants and I reflect together and support the restoration of the community and researcher spirit.

Research Context, Participants, and Data Collection

In the spring of 2023, my femtor, Dr. Revilla, invited me to facilitate a Muxerista Circle for her graduate capstone class. This classroom setting provided an opportunity to observe how healing circle practices function within an academic environment. Rather than conducting a traditional focus group interview, I used the Muxerista Circle as a space for collective reflection and data generation. It is important to note that Muxerista Circles, as a healing-centered pedagogical intervention, arose from a previous study I conducted that explored students' experiences navigating ethnic studies classrooms and the emotional and embodied impacts of

engaging with course material related to racism, sexism, and other forms of systemic oppression.

The following describes the process of the Muxerista Circles. The circle began with a class discussion of the book *Voices from the Ancestors* (Medina & Gonzales, 2019). We focused on Medina & Gonzales (2019) “Talking Circles,” which introduces healing circle practices and the cultural traditions that inform them. After students delivered presentations on different chapters from the book, I facilitated the Muxerista Circle. I prepared the physical space by creating an altar that included books, oils, and items representing the four elements: *tierra*, *agua*, *fuego*, and *aire*. We began with a grounding libation and called in our ancestors. Participants then engaged in breathing exercises to center the group, after which I explained the structure and intentions of the circle.

Participants then engaged in a guided journaling exercise designed to support reflection and collective dialogue. These prompts functioned as reflective questions that guided participant journaling and subsequent circle discussion. Participants were asked to reflect on the following:

1. Take time to reflect on how this semester or year has been for you. What is something you are proud of? What limiting beliefs do you want to release to the altar before the semester ends?
2. What support do you need to finish the semester in thriving mode rather than survival mode?
3. What is one act of self-care you will practice today or this weekend?
4. Create a self-care toolkit that includes the names of people who will support you and actions you will take to rest and regenerate when you feel overwhelmed (for example, drinking enough water, asking professors for extensions, walking outside for ten minutes, scheduling therapy).

My facilitation of the Circle drew from prior participation in community-based healing spaces, including circles facilitated by Purple through the Women of Color (WOC) Collective,² as well as mentorship and encouragement from Profe Anita. Drawing on these lineages, I approached facilitation as a relational and responsive practice. I remained attentive to the group's collective needs and adapted the Muxerista Circle process as needed.

² This is the community collective I joined that hosted Womxn Circles at East Side Cafe, CA. That was founded by our Facilitator Alex Purple.

After journaling, participants shared reflections with the group if they felt called to do so. Many students focused on the first two prompts, reflecting on the challenges of the academic semester and the support they needed to complete their programs. Participants described feelings of exhaustion, vulnerability, and emotional strain related to academic expectations and the weight of engaging with course material addressing systemic oppression. The circle created a space where participants collectively acknowledged these experiences and identified strategies for care, rest, and mutual support.

The session concluded with a collective grounding exercise. Participants engaged in an “energy hug” to reconnect with their bodies and the group, followed by a guided breathing meditation intended to support emotional release and grounding. I encouraged participants to practice self-compassion and to use the self-care toolkit they developed during the journaling exercise as they completed the final weeks of the semester.

One year later, I conducted follow-up interviews with five students who had participated in the original Muxerista Circle. Participants included three Chicana cisgender women and two Chicano cisgender men; two participants identified as queer and two identified as parents or guardians. Conducting interviews nearly a year after the circle allowed participants to reflect on the experience's longer-term impact. Although I initially worried that the passage of time might weaken participants' recollections, the follow-up interviews reinforced many of the insights that emerged during the circle session and provided additional reflection on how the experience shaped participants' understanding of healing, self-care, and academic survival.

Reflections

The reflections from the Muxerista Circle demonstrate that this pedagogical practice functions as a form of spirit restoration for Chicanx/a/o and Latinx/a/o students and educators in ethnic and gender studies classrooms. Participants described the Circle as a space that facilitated emotional release, collective care, and embodied healing in ways they had not previously experienced in academic settings. Several participants expressed surprise at the depth of emotional expression in the Circle, including crying and vulnerability, which they described as unexpected yet affirming in a classroom environment.

Muxerista Healing Praxis

The first reflection that I generated from the data is Muxerista Healing Praxis. I identified this reflection through coding participant interviews and narratives. Participants consistently described the Circle as a space where Muxerista Consciousness moved from theory into lived practice. Several participants explained that they first encountered Muxerista Consciousness through coursework and mentorship within the graduate program. Faculty and mentors introduced Muxerista theory, and students learned to recognize practices that protect spirit and resist spirit murder within academic spaces. Because of this shared foundation, participants entered the Circle with an understanding of Muxerista values and recognized the Circle as an intentional enactment of feminist praxis.

Participants frequently contrasted the Circle with their experiences in traditional ethnic and gender studies classrooms. Matthew (a pseudonym), a graduate student who had taken more than fifteen ethnic and gender studies courses, explained that many classes addressed systems of oppression but rarely incorporated healing practices. He reflected:

I've taken amazing [ethnic studies] courses with just phenomenal professors, like exhilarating ideas, but there was that component missing, the healing aspect of not just ethnic studies but also the healing aspect of being in community, of being in the struggle together. That is a central component. People talked about [healing] in passing as if it's just another thing that people just do without thinking very critically about it. We have to incorporate that into the pedagogy.

Matthew emphasized the importance of moving beyond theoretical discussions of justice to practices that support collective healing in the classroom. He described the Circle as a tangible example of how feminist theory can become pedagogical practice. Matthew continued:

I'm just thinking about all the times that I've been in classes and people have been overtly or very subtly sexist, homophobic, and anti-Black. [We need to incorporate] an explicit Muxerista style project [or a Muxerista Circle] into the classrooms in ethnic studies. [It] would mean that we start to cluster these big ideas about revolution, about agency, and all these things within a very feminist, Muxerista, womanist [pedagogy].

Other participants' reflections also revealed how classroom environments reproduce forms of harm that align with what Revilla (2021) describes as academic spirit murder. Students described experiences of sexism, anti-Blackness, and subtle forms of exclusion within classroom

discussions. These experiences produced frustration and emotional exhaustion, particularly when courses addressed systemic oppression without providing space for reflection, healing, or collective care.

Within this context, participants described the Muxerista Circle as an intentional intervention that allowed them to process emotional responses to course material while remaining in community with one another. Several participants explained that the Circle helped them recognize that the harms they experienced in the classroom reflected structural patterns rather than individual failures.

Participants emphasized the importance of intentionally feminist-centered facilitation. Several students described previous experiences with healing circles that lacked clear facilitation structures or feminist grounding. In those cases, participants recalled moments when individuals shared traumatic experiences without support structures such as grounding exercises, trigger warnings, or collective care practices. These experiences sometimes produced emotional overwhelm rather than healing. I intentionally incorporated community guidelines, trigger warnings, grounding practices, and structured reflection into the Muxerista Circle. These elements created a space where participants could engage in emotional release while remaining supported by the group.

Similarly to Matthew, Tatiana (a pseudonym), another participant, emphasized the importance of feminist-centered facilitation when discussing her experience in the Circle. She explained that healing circles feel “off” when they become male-centered or when facilitators fail to ground the practice in feminist values. For Tatiana, the Circle’s intentional feminist orientation allowed participants to engage in deeper reflection and healing. When asked whether she could envision Muxerista Circles implemented more widely in ethnic studies classrooms, Tatiana responded, “Not just a healing circle, but other kinds of practices [are needed]. Feminist LED.”

Participants suggested that Muxerista Healing Praxis should extend beyond individual circles and become part of broader pedagogical practices within ethnic and gender studies classrooms. Several participants described the Circle as a culturally responsive practice that supports students navigating academic environments where racialized and gendered harms remain present.

Muxerista-Circles as a Site of Communal Building and Relations

The second reflection I generated from the data is Muxerista circles as a site of communal building and relations. All of the individuals who participated in the Muxerista circles shared several examples of what I am naming communal building and relations. This communal building and its relationships were developed by creating a space where students practiced active listening, a conscious and intentional practice. This was further grounded in the trust and care that participants had built throughout their time together before the Muxerista Circle. The visceral and emotional sense that students named showed up in different ways and didn't always need to be expressed through strong emotions, but through subtle acts of empathy and listening. This way of being in community allowed participants to feel a more intentional relationship with one another. For example, Olivia (a pseudonym), a graduate student, expressed the following:

I've been with these people [colegas] for so long. There was [already] a sense of care and trust, [but I found myself in the Muxerista circle] learning, "Oh, this is what those around me are going through. [It] put me in a very emotional state, but not so much about what was occurring within my body, my spirit, but more the way my body, my spirit was taking in [their] energy and vulnerability.

Olivia's practice of feeling emotionally regulated was also due to her stating that she had been actively attending therapy, which allowed her the space to *desahogarse*, or undrown, in ways that sometimes the Muxerista Circle served more of a space to listen to what others were going through and be there for them in community. The Muxerista Circle helped her stay in tune with her *bodymindspirit*, and it was still a reciprocal, communal healing exchange.

Several participants also expressed how the Muxerista Circle, as a site of communal building and relations, became a protected space for them. Given the trust and care that participants named, they felt the responsibility to protect the space for one another. Fernando (a pseudonym), a graduate student, expressed the following:

It was very cathartic. It was very, and the room was a very protected space. The room, I felt very privileged to be in that room, you know, full of working-class mothers, full of queer classmates, Muxeristas, and for them to share what they shared in that space, I felt privileged that they had deemed, I guess, like deeply worthy of being in that same space.

Fernando's quote echoed what many other participants felt about the Muxerista Circles. They were intentional spaces that honored the multidimensional struggles of self and solidarity-building. For Fernando, his identities as a cishetero man who identifies as a feminist, he felt able to be vulnerable within the Muxerista Circle and to reciprocate the level of trust and care in his relationships with his classmates and colegas in the space.

The Muxerista Circle Toolkit

The reflections from the Muxerista Circles demonstrate that this pedagogical practice creates spaces where participants engage healing, emotional release, and collective care within academic environments that often reproduce academic spirit murder (Revilla, 2021).

Participants described the Circle as a rare classroom space where feminist praxis, community accountability, and spirit restoration occurred simultaneously. Aligning with existing scholarship on Muxerista Consciousness (Revilla, 2021), Chicana feminist epistemology (Anzaldúa, 2015), and Black feminism (Collins, 1999) that emphasize relational knowledge production, collective healing, and community-based resistance, I developed the following Muxerista Circle Toolkit to translate these principles into an adaptable pedagogical practice. The toolkit operationalizes the elements participants identified as most meaningful—intentional facilitation, feminist grounding, collective reflection, and structured care practices—so that educators can create spaces that support both critical learning and spirit restoration in ethnic and gender studies classrooms.

Adapting Medina's (2019) approach for *Talking Circles* as my foundational framework, I added a Muxerista intention as a living pedagogical practice that invites educators and students to adapt, revise, and co-create Muxerista Circles in ways that honor their specific communities and contexts.

- I. Identify the Circle's goals and intentions. Facilitators should first identify the purpose of the Muxerista Circle:
 - a. What outcome does the community want?
 - b. Who is best positioned to facilitate the Circle?
 - c. Does the chosen environment provide comfort and protection from interruption and the white gaze?

Once these questions are answered, the preparation work needs to be done to have a strong, mindful facilitator.

2. Establish a shared theoretical foundation. Facilitators should ensure that participants engage with foundational readings that introduce the concepts of spirit murder, spirit restoration, and Muxerista praxis. Recommended readings include:
 - a. “Attempted Spirit Murder: Who Are Your Spirit Protectors and Your Spirit Restorers” (Revilla, 2021)?
 - b. “Resisting Spirit Murder: Nurturing Spirit Restoration and Healing through Muxerista and Jotería Mentorship (Revilla, 2022),”
 - c. *Voices from the Ancestors: Xicanx and Latinx Spiritual Expressions and Healing Practices* (Medina, p. 375-376)
 - d. “Queer Latinx/a/o college student activist liberatory praxis: The Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework (Orozco, 2025),” and
 - e. “The path toward spiritual activism: Queer Latinx/a/o college student (Muxerista) activism as sites of resistance, hope, joy, and futurity (Orozco & Williams, 2025)”.

These readings help participants understand the purpose of the Circle and situate healing practices within broader feminist and decolonial traditions.

3. Prepare the facilitator’s BodyMindSpirit (Cariaga, 2018). Facilitators should assess their capacity before leading the Circle by answering the following questions:
 - a. Have I rested and slept enough to facilitate this space?
 - b. How am I managing my stress or emotional labor?
 - c. Do I have the capacity to remain present and listen actively?
 - d. Do I feel supported in facilitating this Circle?
 - e. What practices will help me feel grounded before beginning?
4. Prepare participants for the Circle. Facilitators should prepare participants before the Circle takes place.
 - a. Identify the population the Circle will serve.
 - b. Consider how cultural, emotional, and spiritual needs will shape the Circle.
 - c. Assign foundational readings before the session.
 - d. Invite students to present key ideas from the readings during class discussion.

Integrating these readings into the course syllabus helps students understand the Circle's purpose before participating.

5. Establish community guidelines. Facilitators should co-create community guidelines with participants. These guidelines should reflect Muxerista Consciousness and social justice praxis.
 - a. Participants should help define:
 - b. respectful listening practices
 - c. expectations for confidentiality
 - d. boundaries for sharing personal experiences
 - e. protocols for responding when guidelines are broken

Shared ownership of these guidelines strengthens collective accountability within the Circle.

6. Create the altar. Participants should collaboratively create an altar that reflects the Circle's collective intentions. Facilitators should invite participants to bring meaningful objects to place on the altar. Facilitators may also include their own items and explain the significance of each object. To ground participants, the altar should include representations of the four elements: a) earth, b) water, c) air, and 4) fire. Facilitators may also prepare a plant or water vessel for the libation ritual.
7. Open the Circle. Facilitators should open the Circle by inviting participants to connect with their BodyMindSpirit. Opening practices may include: a) breathing exercises, b) gentle seated stretches or yoga, c) grounding meditation, and d) a libation ritual calling in ancestors, including matriarchs, feminists, queer, and trans ancestors. These practices establish a shared space of reflection and care.
8. Guide reflective dialogue. Facilitators should prepare no more than three guided prompts that encourage self-reflection and spirit restoration. The prompts should invite participants to: a) reflect on their experiences, b) identify emotional or spiritual needs, and c) consider practices of self-care and collective care. Then, participants share reflections within the Circle while practicing active listening and mutual respect.
9. Close the Circle intentionally. Facilitators should conclude the Circle by returning to the original goals and intentions. Closing practices may include: a) meditation, b) body scan exercises, and c) grounding breathwork. Facilitators should ask participants to identify one action they will take to honor their spirit restoration. Facilitators should also encourage participants to hydrate, eat, and check in with themselves after the Circle.

10. Plan facilitator aftercare. Facilitators must also care for themselves after holding space for the Circle. Facilitators should ask:

- a. How will I honor my own spirit after this Circle?
- b. What practices will help me rest and release the energy of the space?

Intentional aftercare supports the sustainability of healing-centered facilitation.

11. Close the day with personal grounding. Facilitators may end the day with grounding practices such as: a) a cleansing shower, b) journaling, and c) meditation. These practices help release emotional energy and create closure after facilitating the Circle.

Conclusion

This essay began by addressing the persistent problem of academic spirit murder within ethnic and gender studies classrooms. Students and educators often engage deeply with histories of oppression and contemporary systems of violence without structured opportunities to process the emotional and spiritual weight of that knowledge. Drawing on Muxerista Consciousness and feminist epistemologies, I examined how Muxerista Circles can function as healing-centered pedagogical interventions within these spaces.

Through interviews with participants, I found that Muxerista Circles established two key reflections: Muxerista Healing Praxis and Community Building. Participants described the Circle as a space where feminist theory moved from abstract discussion into lived practice. Within the Circle, students processed difficult course material collectively, released emotional tension, and recognized shared experiences of institutional harm. These practices created opportunities for spirit restoration within academic environments that often reproduce academic spirit murder.

In response to the reflections noted previously, I developed the Muxerista Circle Toolkit as a practical framework educators can adapt within their own classrooms. The toolkit translates the principles of Muxerista Consciousness into concrete pedagogical practices that support healing, reflection, and relational accountability. By integrating these practices into ethnic and gender studies classrooms, educators can cultivate spaces where students critically engage systems of oppression while also protecting their spirits and strengthening community.

Muxerista work does not begin or end within the academy. However, educators hold the power to transform classroom spaces into sites of healing, resistance, and collective care.

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