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Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

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***The 2nd Grade Muxerista Classroom: Spirit Restoration and
Healing Pedagogies***

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Abstract

In this reflective piece, Desiré Galvez, a second-grade teacher, invites classroom educators to engage in Muxerista spirit restoration and healing pedagogies. She asks educators to reflect on the question: How can I be a liberator in a system that I work within and that works within me? Desiré reflects on this question by sharing her own Muxerista journey into the classroom space.

Keywords: K-12 education, spirit restoration, healing, pedagogy, muxerista

Dear guides incarnate, elders in the making, educators of the movement,

I write to you as a muxerista¹ healer and educator, inviting you to see me so that you may face yourself with the possibility that breaking open saves our community and us. It is not easy quieting the noise to hear the call, but may this reflection ignite your journey. It is not easy identifying the messages within. It requires us to listen deeply. My inner child yearns to be heard; she pulls at me, trying to point out the ways we still hurt. Our interconnectedness reminds me that this medicine is not just meant for me. Witnessing my students means re-living pain I had buried to survive. Here I am surviving again, hyperventilating in the sea of education, breathing in water that usually feels refreshing. A desert baby drowning in the memories, the history, and cycles come to life. I have minutes to catch my breath throughout the day because the desperation in my students feels like a clawing at my soul. Our nervous systems intertwine, trying to make art of the multiple colors the feelings paint—the collage of broken pieces we each bring.

Growing up in immigrant fear, isolation from family, and a constant fight, flight, freeze response, school was a sanctuary. Both my parents were overworked, traumatized individuals who taught me that surviving was my purpose, and anything beyond that was just a dream. Educational spaces have always been places of connection, even with their own set of wounds, which bring to bodymindspirit. I was born in Las Vegas, but I finished elementary school in Sacramento, California. I don't remember most of that time in my life, as I am barely opening up to process the trauma that happened at that vulnerable age. What I do remember is the tenderness of my third-grade teacher. She planted a seed I am now nurturing to enter a career as a teacher.

Fast forward to today, as a second-grade teacher. I applied in the middle of the year and was thrust into the classroom. I remember Zahara putting a puzzle together in the corner of the room. She sat by herself as usual. She preferred to get lost in a task without the pesky feeling that came up, I imagine, of perceived rejection from her peers. Her hijab was one of many reasons her peers didn't think she fit in. She sat, noticing the other three girls, admired by most in class, working together to solve the other puzzle. They laughed and enjoyed the process. Zahara noticed and started working faster. She felt frustrated, and I could see her

¹Muxerista as defined by Orozco (2025), Revilla (2004), and Revilla et. al. (2022).

world closing in. Even when the other rejected dark-skinned girl, Maliah, came to help, they teamed up to taunt the other girls to slow them down. I tried to sit between them and encourage Zahara and Maliah before checking in with the trio. Zahara couldn't make sense of the pieces, and I could see her thinking brain start to cloud. These clouds would form storms that would sometimes thunder until loud tears were shed.

The pain we carry begs to be witnessed, to be exposed so wounds may finally heal. I write for those in pain and ashamed. Though this is an invitation for reflection for those in the classroom, it can be used by anyone on the path of navigating healing. I hope that my process of reflection can be the beginning of facing the mirrors we cover to survive. I am tired of surviving, of playing it safe to make it through. I grew up in isolation and didn't have to figure out how to collaborate with others. I was taught to follow the rules, to become invisible so we would make it another day. In the silence of a lonely apartment, we had to be quiet so no one would know we were left to be raised by the five channels on the television. This environment watered the seed of fear.

Because survival is all we have known for generations, the impulse for me keeps calling. I remember watching *Moana* and listening to the ancestors' song—that is what my whole life has felt like. Spending so much time alone, the spirits spoke to me. The energy of revolution beckons me, and I hope that, in these words, you feel an unlocking of the portal that has possibly been set by ancestors waiting for you to activate your puzzle-piece contribution.

Facing The Oppressor Within

I dare to dream and explore those dreams. I surrender to the will of those who came before me, guided to heal wounds. I am the firstborn of my mother. From her womb, I've been swimming in ancestral emotional pools passed down for generations. I imagine the weight of the water I carry and have been tasked with wading through. My first heartbreak was my parents, and that wound remains painful. Just like anything else in this messy world, I've opened the closet to excavate and clean it out, and now I'm staring at the pieces, not knowing where they go. That's how I felt stepping into the classroom.

I felt the need to be quiet, not cause chaos, or draw attention to myself. The dysregulation created intolerance, bringing out my inner child to retaliate in immature ways, such as through power struggles. Raising my voice. Asking students why they weren't measuring up. Hypervigilance. I felt like I needed to punish to gain control. That's white supremacy at play

in the classroom. There are moments where something takes over, and I hear my mother's tongue possess me. I can hear and see this happening as if I were out of my body, which in a sense I am. The survival instinct takes over, and I am at war with all of them, including my students.

Mostly, I have reacted from a place of exhaustion and fear. I was tired, overwhelmed, onboarding, processing new systems, learning a new culture, trying to meet my basic needs while filling 20 student cups. Their lights are still bright, but gathering mud to build protective cases. I felt an urge to control because the system demands order. But children are not systems—they are mirrors. Kids trigger you like no one else can. They are a key to our liberation. How can I be a liberator in a system I work within and that works within me? There were mornings I caught myself mimicking the very control I swore I'd never use. The oppressor within me—the one who was raised on silence, obedience, survival—had the mic. Anzaldúa calls this *la facultad* – the ability to see through the veil. bell hooks (1994) calls it self-actualization. I began to ask: Who taught me this way of teaching? And who do I want to be instead?

Spirit Restoration and Healing Pedagogies

Being a Muxerista means being free. Free to be messy, problematic, descaradx, wild. Muxerista pedagogy (Revilla, 2004) invited me to become someone new and to explore parts of me that had long been hidden. I think back to my time as a Las Vegas Muxerista during my undergraduate journey at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). The first conference we attended as the second wave of Muxeristas (Orozco, 2025) was at UCLA in 2015, ten years ago. Anita rented us two rooms for the weekend, and squished five of us in one room. It was the beginning of learning to ask questions. She gave us permission to fumble. There were late nights at UNLV; laughing at trauma; trying to process generational wounds. An older Muxerista, or what Orozco (2025) terms the first wave of Muxeristas, once looked at us in disbelief at how casually we shared trauma. We hadn't begun to grieve yet. First, we had to be the Fool in the tarot deck. We needed to stumble and feel safe in the stumbling. Spirit restoration (Revilla, 2021) is exactly what we explored. I often feel fragmented, pieces of generations compiled together. We carry what we can until it transforms or dies with us. Healing doesn't look clean. Sometimes it's slow mornings, breathing circles, and encouraging our kids to cry. Sometimes it's planting a seed of dignity in a child and not knowing if it'll bloom for 20 years.

Visioning and Praxis – The Muxerista Classroom

In the moments where I lose myself, I remember I must see myself in my students. I ask for help because a vulnerable act teaches children that we are silly geese that make mistakes and we need our flock to help us fly. I ask them to please take some deep breaths with me because I am frustrated. Femtorship is about encouragement and mutual support. It's about remembering our power and unlearning the fear of being seen, especially in moments when we feel less than our ideal. Community space is vital. We aim to rid ourselves of exclusivity. We are humans living to expand what we know. We will stumble. We will hurt each other. But we will stay committed to evolving.

The call for embodiment has been made. Come back home to heal with the earth. No more consuming. The inner child begs in the prison we created to survive. The labyrinth can be decoded through conversation with the inner parts.

Adrienne Maree Brown (2025) defines “loving corrections” as an approach grounded in accountability and compassion. It's about undoing harm, making authentic apologies, accepting appropriate consequences, and growing in relational contexts. She reminds us “we are correcting toward a way of being that we haven't fully experienced, seeding our dreams into a fluid, spectrum, spacious, connected moral ground.” This process will be messy and will require us to be deeply intimate with our inner parts. Through this process, we can branch out into new iterations of what has always existed. We must remember to extend grace and remove our lens of punishment.

This is what I want my classroom to be: a seedbed of liberation, not just for students, but for all of us. I want to teach with softness and fire. I want to model what it looks like to live in process, to live inside possibility. I want to take our power back—even in the face of oppression.

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