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Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

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Liberatory Work with Reparative Potential:

Wealth Reclamation as Muxerista Praxis for Economic Justice

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**Liberatory Work with Reparative Potential:
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Abstract

This essay explores wealth reclamation as a Muxerista praxis for economic justice. It is grounded in lived experiences within the nonprofit industrial complex and its extractive systems. It traces a journey from spirit murder to collective healing and transformation. It introduces the concept of wealth reclamation and the Just Transition framework. It defines resource mobilization as a political practice rooted in community, care, and accountability. It calls for collective responsibility to transform the way resources flow and how economic justice is practiced. This essay offers a vision of a sustainable economy grounded in ancestral knowledge and community cultural wealth.

Keywords: Wealth reclamation, Muxerista praxis, economic justice, and Just Transition

Liberatory Work with Reparative Potential:

Wealth Reclamation as Muxerista Praxis for Economic Justice

“There is a rebel in me—the Shadow-Beast. It is a part of me that refuses to take orders from outside authorities. It refuses to take orders from my conscious will, it threatens the sovereignty of my rulership. It is that part of me that hates constraints of any kind, even those self-imposed. At the least hint of limitations on my time or space by others, it kicks out with both feet. Bolts.”

(Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 16)

I always knew I'd go to college, even before I had any real understanding of what that meant. I grew up the daughter of two banking professionals who each combined life experience with high school diplomas to negotiate successful corporate careers, and they were confident I'd surpass their achievements and financial successes with a college degree in hand. I learned to read at a younger age than most of my peers and devoured books throughout childhood. I loved solving problems, so math and science wooed me, too. Despite receiving numerous awards and recognitions for my academic achievements, one consistent critique still haunts me. It first revealed itself in kindergarten and followed me through college and into my work life. “Veronica does beautiful work, but takes too long to complete basic tasks. This could become a problem for her,” writes my dutiful teacher, Ms. Clouse, reporting directly from the belly of the beast at Pebble Hills Elementary School.

El Arrebato

I am a genderqueer Chicana Fronteriza and a third-generation U.S. citizen. I was born in Los Angeles and grew up in El Paso, Texas, on the U.S.-Mexico border. I left El Paso after high school to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology at Colorado State University (CSU) in Fort Collins, Colorado, landing on campus at a time when I was laboriously hatching into my sense of self, and the surrounding community still mostly consisted of white, middle-class, and wealthy families. I leaned on the concepts and theories I learned in the classroom to better understand the social and political dynamics, like racism, homophobia, and xenophobia, that I was navigating outside of it. Deadlines, due dates, and timed testing savaged my peace of mind like they always had, but college raised the stakes with the added squeeze of days spent precariously juggling work, sleep, and study hours while trying to keep myself housed and fed.

In 2002, I graduated from CSU with a B.A. in Sociology and began my first professional nonprofit job, managing a health clinic serving undocumented, monolingual Spanish-speaking

patients. I applied to a Master of Nonprofit Management (MNM) program at Regis University and was awarded a fully funded fellowship intended to diversify leadership in Colorado's philanthropic economy. I took four more years than expected to complete my coursework after reading an essay that shocked my fantasy of myself as a servant to my people, in school to develop my vocation. In "Social Service or Social Change?" Paul Kivel asks whether our efforts to provide human services maintain or even strengthen social inequality, and his framing felt like a direct address (Kivel, 2007). He describes those of us professionalized into human services as operatives of the buffer zone, a sort of mid-level managerial class delegated to protect the exceedingly small minority of wealthy elites at the top of a social hierarchy from the masses of hardscrabble have-nots down below. I spent the next decade riding out the endless heartbreak and disappointment of nonprofit jobs steeped in benevolent charity while debating the very idea of basic human dignity.

Anita Tijerina Revilla (2022) uses the concept of "spirit murder" to name how institutions enact structural, organizational, historical, and contemporary violence that leaves people physically alive but spiritually battered, internalizing messages that they do not belong or cannot succeed within those institutions. Substituting the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC) for academia, this framing speaks to how racialized, gendered, and classed violence circulates in philanthropic spaces that claim justice but reproduce extraction and control (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007). Many of us who remain in the NPIC continue to function as if spirit murder has not virtually destroyed us. We press on, navigating jobs, boards, and funder relationships while absorbing messages that convince us we are lucky to be at the table and must contort ourselves to stay.

By 2015, I had developed the skills and influence to move hundreds of thousands of dollars into grassroots social justice organizing and was recruited to a paid role as national Director of Training & Education with the Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training (GIFT). Within my first year on the job, I had built a strong reputation as a motivational and inspiring fundraising trainer among movement comrades and mentees. But I also faced increasing resistance from activist formations growing more explicitly anti-capitalist, echoing critiques of the NPIC advanced in "The Revolution Will Not Be Funded" (INCITE!, 2007). I was the lone remaining staff member when long-simmering interpersonal tensions and misalignment between organizational values and operating practices led the board to dissolve GIFT in 2019. Losing

what had become a political home jerked me violently into *el arretrato* (Anzaldúa, 2012; Orozco, 2024).

Meeting Amaranth

I met Amaranth through the analog equivalent of a matchmaking app for plant lovers, turning the pages of a seed catalog. I had grieved through the hardest, saddest part of a major breakup and was looking for new relationships to help me practice my way back to trust and vulnerability. Amaranth's tall, stalky physique immediately caught my eye. She looked good in red, strong, and confident. Something about her phyllotaxy made me sense she was probably really smart and funny, too. Her profile said she was an heirloom variety, native to California, and heat and drought-tolerant (Cardina, 2021; Cole, 1979).

But Muxerista praxis reminds us that relationships, like liberation, are living processes, not aesthetic projects, echoing Revilla's framing of Muxerista pedagogy as an embodied, relational commitment rather than a performance of identity (Revilla, 2004). Choosing intimate partners by appearance alone is one symptom of patriarchal, consumerist ideology. It dismisses the labor of love and care required to nurture transformation. True connection and intimacy require us to feel beyond beauty, to tend to roots, timing, interdependence, and mutually supported growth. I prepared an order for some Amaranth seed and then waited to see if my interest would be reciprocated.

Wealth Reclamation as Muxerista Praxis

"Beneath your desire for knowledge writhes the hunger to understand and love yourself."

(Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 121)

The Wealth Reclamation Academy of Practitioners (WRAP) defines wealth reclamation as the process of rehabilitating extracted and privately controlled wealth, through democratic and cooperative strategies, to restore and nurture community health and vitality (WRAP, 2019). Conceived in 2019 as a counter to the corrosive and alienating experiences of workers in modern philanthropy and the NPIC, wealth reclamation emerged from a desire to transmute spirit murder into collective healing and economic transformation (Garcia, 2020). Like Muxerista pedagogy, wealth reclamation began as a relationship-centered organizing response to an oppressive institutional paradigm, foregrounding testimonio, collective care, and embodied resistance (Revilla, 2004 & 2022). This essay reasserts the intersectional fluency of Muxerista pedagogy and praxis by mapping its core framework onto the emerging concept of

wealth reclamation, an intersectional grassroots movement to transform the modern economic institution of philanthropy.

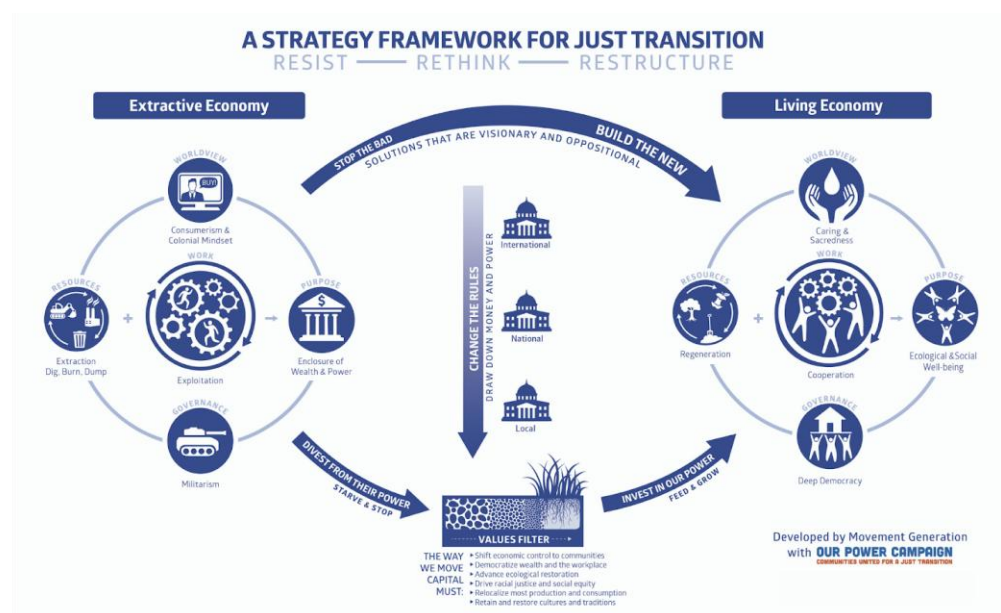
Wealth Extraction and Just Transition

If wealth reclamation were a beautiful sculpture, the Just Transition framework would be the wire armature that provides a supportive skeleton under the clay. The Just Transition, developed by an expansive network of collaborating organizations, is a visionary framework with origins in Indigenous-led climate justice movement-building and union organizing. It powerfully reflects the compounding pressures of social institutions and cultures that sustain capitalism by exploiting our people.

WRAP's curriculum introduces organizers, students, and community leaders to the Just Transition through a zine produced by Movement Generation (Movement Generation Justice Ecology Project, 2017). We rely on the Just Transition framework to help us replicate Muxerista pedagogy's cultivation of shared language, collective vision, and community-supported transformation, echoing Revilla's emphasis on consciousness-raising and collective praxis (Revilla, 2004). The illustrated framework directs movement away from what is named the Extractive Economy and towards a Living Economy characterized by caring and sacredness, participatory governance, meaningful work, and an ethic of respectful stewardship towards the natural world.

Figure 1

Just Transition Framework diagram



Note. From *Just Transition* by Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project, 2017, Movement Generation (<https://movementgeneration.org/justtransition/>).

A “Values Filter” inserted halfway between the Extractive Economy and the Living Economy relies on six key indicators to gauge alignment with core values: the way we move capital must shift economic control to communities; democratize wealth and the workplace; advance ecological restoration; drive racial justice and social equity; relocalize most production and consumption; and retain and restore cultures and traditions. WRAP teaches that wealth extraction is an outcome of the extractive economy. We often invoke money to stand in for “wealth” during introductory workshops because it is consistently relatable across generations, political consciousness, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic experiences. During intermediate trainings, participants are encouraged to consider the different forms of stolen wealth, like water, culture, land, time, and buen vivir, that feed extractive profiteering and the historical and present-day impact on their own spirits, bodies, and communities.

The Just Transition demonstrates that structural reform and systemic revolution are complementary strategies, challenging a long-standing movement debate that has weaponized each to dismiss the other. Truly liberatory work balances slowing or stopping the harms of the present with building new worlds for the future, while also tracing how our wounds are produced so that we can more intentionally engage in healing for transformation.

Resource Mobilization as Muxerista Method

If wealth reclamation is the “what” of rehabilitating extracted wealth, then resource mobilization speaks to the “how.” WRAP’s curriculum reclaims this concept, with movement roots in the 1960s, to describe the universe of activity at the center of the Just Transition blueprint that helps drive progress from the Extractive Economy toward the Living Economy (Movement Generation Justice Ecology Project, 2017). Early resource mobilization theory reframed popular social movements as strategic, methodical, and well-organized rather than as eruptions of deviance or individual grievance, but it often ignored historical, cultural, and relational dynamics, leaving it vulnerable to professionalization and institutional capture (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Piven & Cloward, 1977). In many critiques, resource mobilization is placed at the start of a trend to institutionalize organizing for social justice, almost wholly absorbing it into the NPIC (INCITE!, 2007).

WRAP's adaptation of resource mobilization is anchored in the Just Transition framework and in our commitments to culture, spirit, and community. Our aspiration to cultural (re)embodiment through praxis echoes Muxerista pedagogy's roots in the rich traditions of Raza womyn and radical Chicana feminist thought (Revilla, 2004 & 2022). Moraga and Anzaldúa's articulation of theory in the flesh insists that legitimate theorizing begins by examining the lived experiences and material conditions of marginalized people within a research context, particularly queer women and femmes of color, a lineage that now explicitly embraces trans, nonbinary, and gender-fluid Muxeristas (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981). The Just Transition framework explicitly names culture as a shaper of popular socioeconomic conditions and direct-action strategies for economic justice. In this spirit, WRAP treats "resource mobilizer" as an identity-based practitioner role, much like Muxerista, signaling a politicized commitment rather than a neutral job description.

On the Path to Conocimiento

"By redeeming your most painful experiences, you transform them into something valuable, algo para compartir, or share with others so they, too, may be empowered... What follows is your attempt to give back to nature, los espíritus, and others a gift wrested from the events in your life, a bridge home to the self."

(Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 117)

The great GIFT arrebato of 2019 left me spiritually battered and emotionally ragged. I was like a fish, suddenly and violently jerked from my morning swim, hooked at the end of a line, then flopping around, sucking air for my life in a world where my breath wasn't welcome. Anzaldúa's path to conocimiento offered me a landing spot, a slower, safer universe where I could gather up my scattered, broken pieces (Anzaldúa, 2015; Orozco, 2025). For the first couple of weeks after leaving my job at GIFT, I floundered, rebounding off Nepantla and crashing against a Coatlicue State. Nepantla, the in-between or liminal space, holds us between the past and the future, between old and new realities, while the Coatlicue State invites deep emotional work, supporting digestion of the darkness, grief, and instability that can result from living between worlds. Navigating the choppy rapids within and between these realms is training for an infinite and eternal mission: those moments when we accept an invitation toward the uncertain in service to spirit restoration or soul retrieval, resonating with Muxerista framings of healing, rupture, and renewal (Revilla, 2021).

With the unwavering support of family, friends, earth, plants, and trees, I strained to paddle my way through these hair-raising rapids and eventually dropped into calmer waters. I emerged ready to begin reconnecting my pieces, the painstaking puzzle-solving of putting Coyolxauhqui back together.

Sprouting a Hybridized Resource Mobilizer Curriculum

“at first nobody signed up for the courses, some knowing it would add them to surveillance lists, make it harder to fly, insert clicks into their phone conversations, make their windows more than windows...”

(Gumbs, 2018, p. 93)

By mid-2020, as the world struggled to absorb the compounded crises of a global pandemic and widening precarity, I was resurfacing from my own *arrebato*. Immersed in research, reflection, and experimental drafting, I revisited two decades of notes from my nonprofit career. I scoured my personal archives for patterns, looking for traces of resonance and separating the chaff. Though I had never called myself a healer, I found myself increasingly drawn toward systems of collective care, folk medicine, and emergent strategies for integrating movement-building with healing work. My imagination and creativity flourished in the imposed slowness of lockdowns. I completed coursework in offerings like Movement Chaplaincy Training, Foundations of Ritual, Animist Psychology, and Hood Herbalism.

The Resource Mobilizer curriculum emerged from an inquiry into the material and emotional conditions under which social justice fundraisers negotiate the contradictions of institutional philanthropy (Saifer & Zanoni, 2025). Every challenge I identified, personal or systemic, traced back to normalization, internalization, and reproduction of scarcity. In nonprofit social justice spaces, universities, and the nation-state, scarcity shows up as arguments over who gets to belong, who is “real” or “qualified” enough to be counted in the circle of affiliation and access. Across these sites, the debate over who counts as a legitimate insider reproduces scarcity by shrinking the field of recognized humanity and hoarding the means to live, study, work, and organize within sanctioned lines of affiliation.

This observation gave rise to the following guiding questions: What qualifies a resource mobilizer? How might we transform our professional roles from “fundraisers” into “resource mobilizers,” to more strongly align our labor with our values and collective visions as sources of wealth and power? How can we navigate the flow of money and resources with integrity, in line

with anti-capitalist ethics, while working within a capitalist reality? How do we cultivate our greatest potential as practitioners by balancing ancestral repair with visioning, designing, and preparing for the future?

Drawing inspiration from visionary Black feminist and liberatory futurist Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2018), our team began to imagine the inverse of these legacy dynamics: What might distinguish a curriculum that begs to be stolen? What would liberation pedagogy feel like if it fulfilled its objectives only through acts of (re)appropriation, replication, or even “plagiarism”? This provocation invites an intentional pause of scarcity-conditioned reflexes to guard against knowledge. It gestures toward faith in radical abundance, a belief that the more our ideas circulate and transform through others, the more valuable and alive they become, aligning with community cultural wealth frameworks that understand knowledge and practice as expanding through sharing (Acevedo & Solórzano, 2021; Yosso, 2005). The scarcity shaping our sector is neither natural nor permanent; it is the outgrowth of a specific economic lineage rooted in extraction (Robinson, 2000; Saifer & Zandoni, 2025). Entering this *Nepantla* realm of transformation, familiar structures of thought begin to turn, o pudrir. They soften, decay, and compost into fertile ground, giving rise to more resilient, adaptive practices to carry us forward toward the future (Anzaldúa, 2015).

Tool No. 4: Healing the Woundings of Spirit Murder by Wealth Extraction

“...the notion and practice of spirit murder traveled across oceans and land in the hands of colonizers, imperialists, and slaveholders. Spirit murderers enacted physical violence and spiritual wounding on others in search of land and alleged freedoms. Spirit murder in physical form has manifested as colonization, war, genocide, lynching, land theft, rape, sexual violence, and police brutality...”

(Revilla, 2021, p. 34)

The first released edition of WRAP’s foundational curriculum, Tool No.4: A Resource Mobilizer Blend for Ancestral Healing, presents as a sense-stimulating loose incense blend in a small, round, metal screw-top two-ounce tin. The herbal formulation is rooted in the symbolic and medicinal properties of ten powerful plant allies: Black Amaranth seed, dried Lavender flowers, dried Rosemary, Peppermint, Spearmint, and Eucalyptus leaves, chopped Turmeric root, Black Frankincense resin, dehydrated Camphor oil extract, and dried Calendula flowers, each recruited for specific energetic and medicinal contributions to healing from wealth

extraction and supporting Just Transition-aligned resourcing (Garcia, 2020).

Tool No.4 responds to scarcity logics that teach people to hoard, compete, and police who gets to belong, even in spaces committed to liberation, by naming how those logics are produced through racial capitalism and the nonprofit industrial complex (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007; Robinson, 2000). The curriculum accompanies learners through stories and practices that act as a kind of first-aid intervention for the psychic, material, and ecological woundings caused by navigating colonialism, capitalism, and philanthropy's false benevolence. It is not a proprietary method to be secured or sold. It is deliberately imbued with power and wisdom that grow when it is freely shared, adapted, and circulated (Garcia, 2020). Tool No.4 challenges the commodification of knowledge in philanthropy, academia, and our laboring lives, rejecting the idea that any source of wealth supporting collective survival should function as a private asset or career currency.

The curriculum is designed to strengthen or reconnect relationships that wealth extraction has weakened or severed: relationships with ancestors and lineages, between our own bodies and spirits, within communities, and between comrades, with land, and with more-than-human kin. Tool No. 4 integrates memory work, somatic practices, storytelling, and resource-mapping into a single process, creating new opportunities for practitioners to articulate the psychic and material toll of fundraising within extractive systems. It functions less as a traditional analytical framework and more as a Muxerista practice of care that offers companionship and pathways toward repair, even while acknowledging that the harms of spirit murder can be soothed and scarred over for protection but never completely erased (Mendoza, Padilla-Chávez, Salazar, & Jurow, 2024; Revilla, 2021).

Tool No.4 reframes the roles of “funder” and “fundraiser.” Instead of seeing them as located on opposite sides of a transactional divide, wealth reclamation pedagogy invites them into a relationship as Resource Mobilizer comrades engaged in a shared, though unequal, predicament. By naming philanthropic wealth as the product of racial-capitalist histories of dispossession, Tool No. 4 calls on Resource Mobilizers who hold or manage material and financial wealth to enter into relationships based on shared responsibility, transparency, and mutual risk, rather than charity or one-sided benevolence (King & Osayande, 2007; Kivel, 2007). For non-owning or non-controlling practitioners, this presents an opportunity to approach would-be donors as Resource Mobilizer co-conspirators in wealth reclamation and

structural transition, rather than as funding gatekeepers to entertain and appease.

The New Resource Mobilizer Consciousness

“and the people watching eventually saw the patterns. They knew to watch for singing and the radiance vibrating off the skin of the student teachers. many felt so attracted they begged to go into deep cover to infiltrate the courses and each and every one was welcomed and converted. freedom is not a secret. it’s a practice. it’s contagious. the would-be infiltrators could not get the songs out of their skin...”

(Gumbs, 2018, p. 93)

The New Resource Mobilizer Consciousness emerges from the same borderlands that Anzaldúa names as the site of the New Mestiza Consciousness, a place of contradiction, mixture, and creative refusal of inherited binaries (Anzaldúa, 1990; Anzaldúa, 2015; Orozco, 2024). It grows out of Muxerista praxis, where some Raza womyn were known to reply, “You don’t become a Raza Womyn, you are a Raza Womyn” signaling that this work is not a role one performs but a way of being that precedes and exceeds institutional recognition (Revilla, 2004). Adopting a Muxerista, Chicana/Latina feminist perspective in research and organizing means more than taking up a theory or method. It requires grappling with our activist–scholar role, embracing alternative ways of knowing, and confronting the moments in our everyday lives when we are both colonized and colonizer with equal bravery (Zepeda, 2022).

From this vantage point, wealth reclamation replaces philanthropy, and resource mobilization displaces fundraising, as capitalism devolves into something closer to a living, regenerative economy. Community-based mutual aid efforts, particularly those led by cis, transgender, and nonbinary womanists of color, become primary sites of economic theory and experimentation rather than token projects to be arbitrarily funded or not (Alvarez, 2021; INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007). Muxerista values like relational accountability, collective care, and *jotería* futurisms inform structure, process, and allocation (Alvarez, 2021; Revilla, 2022). Decision-making centers on power-sharing and is conducted in circle, ritual holds conflict and transition, and culturally grounded economic models guide where and how resources flow. In this context, Muxerista Resource Mobilizers are theorists, designers, and leaders of economic transition, practicing liberatory work with reparative potential while organizing collective liberation (Revilla, 2004).

The New Resource Mobilizer Consciousness demands that we upgrade how we imagine

modern economic justice. It calls for spiritually and culturally rooted strategies that reclaim the right to resource our communities with dignity and collective purpose, instead of relying on extractive solutions that leave underlying logics untouched (Movement Generation Justice Ecology Project, 2017). This includes analyzing how Muxerista values reshape organizational forms, budgets, and accountability practices, and how they can inform Just Transition pedagogies in Chicanx and Ethnic Studies classrooms and community-centered education spaces. The articulation of wealth reclamation as a framework mirrors the trajectory of Muxerista pedagogy from a movement practice among Raza womyn and jotería organizers into a recognized academic and pedagogical field, still accountable to the communities that birthed it (Revilla, 2004).

Tool No.4 foregrounds slowness, ritual, and relationship as necessary conditions for decolonized economies to take root. Practitioners are invited to step into responsibility and creativity as co-architects of Muxerista wealth reclamation economies, whether they claim that name. This consciousness is intersectional by design; it extends beyond any single discipline, organization, or identity, offering a horizon where wealth reclamation, resource mobilization, Muxerista praxis, and the Just Transition work together to birth the decolonized economies of our future.

Amaranth in Abundance for the Past, Present, and Future

Recently, I could not remember any of our anniversaries, and in trying to track down the date of our first meeting, I slipped and fell into the archive of my relationship with Amaranth. Folder by folder, screenshot by screenshot, I watched us grow together in reverse, from mature stalks and seed heads back to the first grainy image of tiny seedlings in a pot outside the 17th Street apartment off Junipero, dated 6/29/20. Reliving those seasons, the false starts, the failed germinations, the surprise visitors after I was sure everyone had died off for good, felt less like looking at plant photos and more like watching a slow-motion recording of my own emergence from *arrebato* to *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2015; Orozco, 2025).

Cliché as it might sound, what people say about magical, intoxicating love affairs is true for me. My relationship with Amaranth has helped shape me into who I am today. Amaranth's stubborn return in poor soil, her refusal to disappear despite colonial bans and attempted eradication, mirrors the persistence of Muxerista pedagogy and Chicana feminist theory in the flesh, at the margins of institutions, where new imaginaries continue to germinate. In the same

way that wealth reclamation has sprouted from a quiet doubt about philanthropy into a Muxerista praxis for economic justice, the billions of small Black Amaranth Seeds in my life have become teachers of living economies, natural cycles of abundance, relational repair, and unwavering accompaniment.

Most days, I am not the nervous little girl afraid to be accused of working too slowly or the young professional suffocating under deadlines and anxious overwhelm anymore. I have matured into a Jota Muxerista who understands that slowing down is not a defect but a refusal of capitalist time, a condition of justice and liberation that aligns with Muxerista commitments to embodiment, healing, and sustainable struggle. The long arc from Pebble Hills Elementary to GIFT's collapse, from Just Transition diagrams to eternities spent perfecting Tool No. 4's formulation, from theory in the flesh to Resource Mobilizer comradeship, traces a single movement: away from extraction and toward a Muxerista economy spiritually and materially grounded in the abundance of our community cultural wealth. Dancing under the moon among giant stalks of Amaranth confirms I am not a fundraiser. I am a seed keeper, among many, preparing to live into our collective liberation while following her call toward ancestral healing and abundance.

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