



Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis : *Art. Activism. and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration*

Volume 20 Issue 2, AMAE Special Double Issue, Part 2

Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

2026



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Cover Art

La Siembra

by Zamara Cuyún, 2026

<https://www.zamaracuyun.com/>



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Artist Statement

As a Latina artist, moving within predominantly white spaces, my art is my resistance. Inspired by my ancestral connections to the Maya homeland in highland Iximulew (Guatemala), it is a resistance against the powerful forces of colonization pervasive in Minnesota (my home of birth) and across Las Américas. It is a visual resistance that spans time and space, seeking connection with other Latinas, Indigenous women, and women of the global majority to celebrate the dignity and power of our shared life experiences and to reinforce our connections with one another in the face of ever more challenging circumstances. My dark-to-light painting technique points to a philosophy of darkness as potential, with the ever-present possibility of beauty emerging from the universe's darkness and of connections emerging from the darkness of memory.

For over 500 years, most accounts of Maya history and cosmology have been produced by non-Indigenous sources. Maya voices—especially female voices—are absent from these narratives. When Indigenous women—human and sacred alike—do make an appearance in Western-produced literature, their original roles within their cultures of origin are perverted. Across what is today known as “the Americas,” Indigenous women have been gazed upon and interpreted through the European colonizers’ lenses of White Supremacy, patriarchy, and Christianity.

Our goddesses and sacred grandmothers have been stolen, defiled, abused, and transformed into “devils,” “witches,” and “shit-eaters.” False interpretations have contributed to cycles of violence and historical trauma, which persist today—not only in the way that Indigenous women are perceived by outsiders, but also as justification for countless crimes against humanity across both American continents.

Brown and female, we are objectified, romanticized, hyper-sexualized, and de-humanized. We are preconditioned by the mainstream Euro-centric cultures into which we are born and raised to de-value ourselves and to be devalued by others - reduced to the “Indian Princess” or the “Ixta Fea” (ugly, dirty Indian girl). These stereotypes produce devastating consequences when we consider the alarming rates of abuse, rape, disappearance, murder, self-harm, and suicide plaguing Indigenous women and girls.

When we unite to uphold one another as Latinas/x, we become a powerful force to counter these narratives, re-imagining the mythical and re-humanizing the living. We can reclaim our sacred grandmothers, ourselves, and future generations.

It's time to reclaim our sacred grandmothers, ourselves, and our future generations. Our Grandmothers—past, present, and future—are powerful sources of love, strength, courage, and healing. Within each of us, they plant these seeds - teaching us the fundamental lessons of self-love, self-care, self-determination, and dignity. In turn, we are called to mentor—to pass these lessons on to our children and communities.

The pieces submitted to this special issue are only a small sample of the visual stories of our Indigenous grandmothers that are not often told in the colonialist narratives that actively work to erase the “Indio” from their histories. They speak to the interconnections among women—past, present, and future. They honor and connect us, like umbilical cords, to our ancestral grandmothers—sacred and human alike—and to one another.

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.



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Introduction (Special Double Issue Introduction Part II)

The Origins of the Muxerista Thought and Consciousness

Anita T. Revilla, PhD

California State University, Los Angeles

Special Double Issue Introduction Part II

The Origins of the Jotería-Muxerista Thought and Consciousness

Anita Tijerina Revilla, PhD

California State University, Los Angeles

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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***Seeds from the Land: A Muxerista Testimonio of Ancestral Memory,
Spirit Restoration, & Pedagogies of the Home***

Rebecca Catzalco-Soria

Claremont Graduate University

Seeds from the Land: A Muxerista Testimonio of Ancestral Memory, Spirit Restoration, & Pedagogies of the Home

Rebecca Catzalco-Soria

Claremont Graduate University

Abstract

This article presents an intergenerational *testimonio* of my grandmother, Clarita. I explore how acts of care, language, and memory become methods of survival and resistance within educational spaces that have historically erased women like her. I examine how *apapachadas*, spiritual embraces, function as healing practices and knowledge production. Building on the works of Revilla (2004), Delgado Bernal (2001), and Anzaldúa (2012), home is our first classroom and abolitionist site. This is where care becomes theory and memory becomes pedagogy. As a granddaughter-scholar, this writing is both remembrance and restoration. It is a return to the stories that shaped my understanding of learning, resilience, and belonging. I interweave Clarita's story with my own healing, storytelling, and everyday resistance. This work contributes to ongoing conversations about Muxerista pedagogy by offering a lived example of theory-in-practice, rooted in love, labor, and legacy.

Keywords: spirit restoration, *testimonio*, muxerista pedagogy, pedagogies of the home, abolitionist education

Figure I

My Grandmother Clarita, 1963, Modesto Junior College, California.



Introduction

Before institutions tried to limit her, my Grandmother, Clarita, defined herself through movement, culture, and joy. In Figure I, captured in 1963 at Modesto Junior College in California, she dances *Jarabe Tapatío*, her skirt in motion, her head lifted with confidence. This photograph is more than a family keepsake. It is an archival offering through time, a memory that reminds us that resistance begins in the body and in the memories it carries.

Like the rose that grew from the concrete, my Grandmother's spirit pushed through the cracks of racism, labor, and loss to bloom in places that were never made for her. That image of growth reminds me of the women in my family, who kept finding ways to rise and bloom even when the ground beneath them was hard and unforgiving.

While this work centers on my Grandmother Clarita's story, it also traces how the inequities she faced, such as racism, classism, and linguistic discrimination, ripple across generations. My Mother and I have each encountered these systems in new forms, she within the classroom, I within the academy. Though the contexts shift, the struggle remains connected. Her story is the seed, ours the branches, growing toward the same light of survival and transformation. Through the methodology of *testimonio*, I trace how spirit restoration, femtorship, and intergenerational survival have shaped our journeys as Muxeristas. Drawing from Revilla's (2022) framing of spirit protectors and spirit restorers, I read my Grandmother's

life as both pedagogy and archive. Her labor and love are not just memories, but theories in motion.

Central to my work is a guiding question: How do working-class Mexican American women transform everyday acts of care into forms of resistance and healing? To explore this question, I offer the framework of *apapachadas*, a term rooted in the Nahuatl word *apapachar*, meaning “to caress with the soul.” I expand this concept by theorizing *apapachadas* as elements of Muxerista and abolitionist pedagogies of care, and by creating my own definition of healing with the soul, emerging from the home, the classroom, and the community.

I conceptualize *apapachadas* as embodied practices that sustain dignity within violent institutions. They offer a way to understand how women like my Grandmother and Mother built life-affirming practices within institutions that attempted to erase them. Through intergenerational *testimonio*, I seek not only to honor their stories but also to demonstrate how care, refusal, healing, and memory become abolitionist acts. This work follows the evolving vision of Muxerista pedagogy (Revilla, 2004; Revilla et al., 2022), a living practice of resistance, care, and spirit restoration. As a Granddaughter-scholar, I see my writing as part of this ever-evolving movement, one that holds storytelling, femtorship, and healing as radical educational acts. Through my Grandmother’s testimonios, I seek to honor everyday activism and transformative love, defining Muxerista praxis. It is Muxerista theory in practice. The next section grounds my position in this lineage and shows how our stories became a shared pedagogy of survival and transformation.

Intergenerational Testimonio: Positionality and Method

I write from the in-between, where the women in my life, my Grandmother and my Mother, shape how I understand the world and how I move throughout academia. I am both their witness and their legacy holder. This piece emerges from what Gloria Anzaldúa (2012) calls *Nepantla*, a space between worlds, where survival, migration, and knowledge pass through generations as lessons of care and resistance. Throughout this piece, I intentionally capitalize the words *Mother* and *Grandmother* to honor them not only as familial figures, but as epistemological and spiritual sources of knowledge. This capitalization is an act of admiration and resistance. It honors their lived experiences, wisdom, and care as theoretical lineages equal to any found in academia. By naming them in this way, I highlight their power as educators,

healers, and cultural theorists within our family's genealogy. In their hands, healing is not just care work but cultural work, a pedagogy of love restoring what the world too often takes.

This essay draws on *intergenerational testimonio*, a co-created narrative between my Grandmother, my Mother, and me. Rather than a single interview, it has unfolded over years of *pláticas* in my Grandmother's room, family stories in our living room, and afternoons sorting photographs at the kitchen table. Testimonio structures how knowledge circulates in our family, how I honor her story while tracing my own becoming as a scholar.

I understand this approach as a Muxerista and decolonial methodology rooted in relationship, accountability, and love. Following Delgado Bernal et al. (2012), *testimonios* center lived experience as theory and as political resistance. By co-constructing my Grandmother's narrative, I resist the academic tendency to separate researcher from participant. Our stories are braided across three generations, woven together through healing, culture, and the wisdom of those who came before us. Our shared act of remembering becomes a practice of *apapachar*, to heal with the soul, a gesture that restores spirit while refusing erasure.

Through this method, I also situate my own academic journey alongside hers. My Grandmother attended Modesto Junior College, the community college that served our rural community, in the 1960s; my Mother in the 1990s; and I in 2014—three generations, sixty years apart, yet bound by the same struggle and perseverance. By writing from within this lineage, I recognize the classroom, the field, and the home as interlocking sites of knowledge production. My goal is not simply to be a storyteller, but to use it to theorize *apapachadas*, the everyday acts of care that become a pedagogy of survival and spirit restoration. These are stories of women who did not just survive but taught me how to live, to love, and to resist.

In the next section, I turn to my Grandmother's early experiences of migration and education as a living *testimonio*. These stories show how working-class Mexican American women transform pain into pedagogy and survival into healing. Through them, I illustrate how *apapachadas*, tender, soul-deep gestures of care, emerge through labor, learning, and solidarity.

Bearing Witness: Migration, Education, and Spirit Restoration

Through the methodology of *testimonio*, I document my Grandmother's life as both story and theory, an intergenerational archive bridging memory, pedagogy, and survival. Her recollections are not simply memories. They are lessons of resistance lived through care, labor, and the pursuit of dignity.

My Grandmother recalls her first days in the United States as a time of confusion, but also of hope. She and her Mother migrated with their hearts dreaming of opportunity, carrying little more than faith and determination. After arriving, she began working long hours in the fields, a labor that left lasting marks on her body and spirit. She remembers the ache in her joints from bending under the hot sun, the broken toes that still affect how she walks, and the loss of strength in her hands after years of pulling, picking, and lifting. She recalls the indignity of relieving herself between rows of crops, with no access to proper facilities, always working, no matter the risks. One instance changed the trajectory of her story. My Grandmother was deep in the far rows of the orchard, quickly filling her basket with peaches, when she noticed how quiet the fields had become. She looked up, realizing the other workers were gone. As she made her way to the front, *el jefe* stopped her and asked where she'd been. She explained she had been lost in the trees, working all the way in the back. What she did not know was that while she was picking in silence, ICE agents had swept through the orchard, detaining workers and two of her family members. They never reached her hidden row. That day, she was safe, but the fear wove itself into her body. From that moment, each day in the fields felt like a battlefield, filled with anxiety and the constant need to look over her shoulder.

Clarita's survival in the orchard was more than chance. It was an act of *spirit protection*, what Revilla (2022) describes as "the prevention of spirit murder," a term first used by Williams (1991) to describe the systemic destruction of hope through racism and dehumanization. In that moment, her body became both witness and archive, carrying the trauma of displacement and desire for restoration. Her decision to pursue education was not simply an economic choice but a spiritual one, an *apapachada* of self-preservation challenging systemic dehumanization through the pursuit of knowledge.

During our *pláticas*, my grandmother takes me on a journey through her education at Modesto Junior College, where her experience was marked by both encouragement and erasure. Some professors believed in her, affirming her *esperanza* and nurturing her dreams. Others heard her accent, judged her English, and deemed her unworthy of academic success, dismissing the knowledge she carried with her. After earning her associate's degree, she hoped to transfer to California State University, Stanislaus, just sixteen miles away. With her older brother's help, she learned to drive, earned her license, and proudly bought a \$300 1960s Corvair 700 to make that journey possible. But her hopes were cut short. A conversation with

a school counselor and representatives from the nursing department ended with immediate dismissal. They didn't take the time to know her story or see her potential. When she asked about scholarships or financial aid, she was met with a hard no. With no advocate by her side, she took their response as final and was forced to pivot her path.

Although my Grandmother faced ridicule from some professors and peers for her accent and the clothes she wore, she also experienced moments of kindness, *femtorship*, and *spirit restoration* that reminded her she mattered. These encounters gave her the courage to continue her studies and obtain her associate's degree in a system that tried to make her feel out of place. In her accounting class, a young Black woman became a trusted peer and *femtor*, helping her complete assignments on balancing checkbooks, managing finances, and understanding profit margins, skills she uses today. In a speech class she dreaded, where her fear of public speaking clashed with the pressure of being an English-speaking second-language learner, she initially failed her exam. However, instead of letting her struggle define her, her professor offered her a second chance, and a classmate encouraged her to do a "how-to" speech on making a *jarrón*, a clay vase, a craft she had learned in her hometown of Puebla, Mexico. When she shared something rooted in her own cultural knowledge, she passed the course. She also found a mentor in her English professor, who volunteered to meet with her after class. Together they sat in the language lab, where she wore headphones and practiced phrases like "Good morning," "Good afternoon," and "How are you?" repeating each word with intention. These acts of solidarity helped her navigate a system that was not built for her, reminding her that sometimes, *spirit restoration* begins when someone simply chooses to see you.

My Grandmother's story reflects the heart of *Muxerista pedagogy*: a refusal to remain complicit in systems of harm, and a reclamation of life through learning, love, and cultural survival. As the Latina Feminist Group (2001) reminds us, our stories are not just personal. They are part of a collective feminist praxis that bridges generations and geographies. The *testimonios* in *Telling to Live* emphasize the power of remembering and witnessing to reclaim cultural identity and restore self. In this sense, the stories passed from my Grandmother to my Mother to me function as both familial memory and pedagogical survival. Her pivot from the field to the classroom was not an individual decision but an act of *spirit restoration*. That shift marked her refusal to remain disposable within agricultural labor economies. Through

education, she sought to heal the wounds of exploitation and rewrite the future for those who come after her.

These encounters within the community college classroom demonstrate the power of *apapachadas* as collective acts of care. Through mentorship and solidarity, Clarita's learning became a reciprocal exchange. She was both student and teacher, receiving and giving care. These moments of mentorship, patience, and cultural exchange embody Muxerista pedagogy in practice. As Revilla (2022) reminds us, these are moments of *spirit restoration*, ways of reimagining education as an abolitionist space of healing rather than exclusion. Bearing witness to her journey is both a personal and political act of reclamation that ties her resistance to my own, ensuring that her lessons continue to live within and beyond me.

The Practice of Spirit Restoration

In my family, spirit restoration is not a solitary act; rather, it is an inheritance, passed between women like a quiet language, a whispered promise that none of us will be left behind in our healing. Each generation of women in my lineage, from my Grandmother Clarita, my Mother, to me, has moved through cycles of fragmentation and becoming. We have each been dismembered in our own way, by migration, labor, and the silence that so often follows institutional violence. However, across time and distance, we have found ways to gather the scattered parts of ourselves and each other. Following Revilla (2022), I understand *spirit restoration* as a political, emotional, and spiritual intervention against the violence of erasure. Building on Revilla's framework, I understand *apapachadas* as a living methodology within Muxerista pedagogy, an embodied practice where care itself becomes collective resistance. When people show up for each other, listen deeply, share stories, hold pain, mentor, nurture, and protect one another, those acts are not just emotional support. They are epistemological. They generate insight about power, survival, resistance, and healing. Care teaches us how systems harm and how communities persist.

To deepen this framework, I turn to Gloria Anzaldúa's (2015) interpretation of Coyolxauhqui, the dismembered moon goddess whose story reminds us that healing is nonlinear but is a continual process of re-membering the self from the fragments of trauma and loss. Anzaldúa teaches that we do not return to a previous wholeness. We reassemble ourselves into new configurations of strength. Her framing resonates with the women in my family, who have long practiced this re-membering not through grand gestures but through

everyday rituals of care. In the face of migration and marginalization, their healing became an act of refusal, to survive, to educate, to love despite systems that sought to erase us.

In my family, *apapachadas* are the most intimate expression of that restoration. They live in my Grandmother's quiet prayers, in my Mother's encouragement, in the tenderness that carries across generations. These soul-healing hugs are not symbolic. They are the language through which we repair what the world fractures. My Grandmother shares her *apapachadas* through her faith and labor; my Mother, through her unwavering belief that I belong in academic spaces; and I offer mine through this very writing, through the act of placing our stories into the archive of theory. In these exchanges, care becomes theory, and love becomes methodology. I extend Revilla's vision by positioning *apapachadas* as both practice and pedagogy, a living methodology that bridges ancestral memory, affective care, and feminist resistance.

As Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) reminds us, care work is often invisible, especially when performed by women of color, yet it remains central to disability justice and survival. In our family, care has never been a luxury. It has always been a method of staying alive. Aurora Levins Morales (2019) similarly writes that storytelling itself is medicine. By telling the truth of our lives, raw, unpolished, and tender, we perform a kind of spiritual surgery that both reveals and heals. *Testimonios* become a kind of *vaporu* for the soul to heal through memory, scent, and the stories we share.

Muxerista pedagogy, then, becomes a way of life and a way of loving (Orozco & Williams, 2025). It is enacted not only in classrooms but in our kitchen, in encouragements, in the silences between generations where healing still happens. When I *apapacho* my Grandmother's story, gathering its fragments and holding them with tenderness like a newborn baby, I am not only writing for her. I am restoring her spirit in a world that once tried to diminish it. In doing so, I feel her restoring mine.

In many ways, this writing is also a love letter to the women who came before, to those who hold my hand while standing beside us now, and to the ones who will continue our work long after we are gone. Through their hands, healing became legacy; in their care, survival became pedagogy. Spirit restoration is not just an act of looking back, but an ongoing offering to the universe of our making, one that honors the lineage of mujeres who continue to teach us how to rebuild the world with tenderness.

This is the deepest expression of the Coyolxauhqui imperative and of Revilla's call to spirit restoration, not simply to heal from fragmentation, but to transform it into something that radiates. Through *apapachadas*, storytelling, and generational love, we practice a living form of Muxerista pedagogy, one that transforms pain into pedagogy, care into theory, and survival into sacred knowledge.

Healing always finds its way back home. Spirit restoration teaches that repair begins in the everyday in kitchens filled with memory, in stories whispered across generations, in the tenderness that insists on survival.

El Hogar Nos Enseñó a Resistir

In our family, knowledge has always lived beyond the classroom. It has taken root in our kitchen table, in everyday rituals, in bilingual prayers, and in the ways we hold each other through hardship. The home has always been our first site of *spirit restoration*, where *apapachadas* take form through food, stories, laughter, and the language of care. But across three generations, the wisdom we carried from our home into institutional spaces was consistently dismissed, misread, or ridiculed.

My Grandmother Clarita remembers being mocked by white men for wearing a traditional dress with a *crinolina*, common in Latine culture as part of a quinceañera dress. That ridicule was not just about clothing. It was about identity, about shaming her for carrying her homeland on her body. Years later, my Mother had hopes to pursue a career in education after seeing her cousins become *maestras*. When my Mother entered college at the age of 22, she was told by her professor that her pedagogical instincts, her bilingual fluency, and her ability to connect with students through shared cultural experience were not professional or scholarly enough. Her Spanish, instead of being seen as a resource, was framed as a disadvantage. Similarly, I have sat in college classrooms where mostly Anglo professors rejected the stories I brought from home, stories rooted in migration, memory, and resilience, as “not academic.” Each of us, in our own time, was told we did not belong.

We did belong. We just carried a different kind of knowledge, and that took me years to understand. What my Grandmother wore, what my Mother brought to the table, and what I now carry forward as their legacy were all forms of knowing. As Delgado Bernal (2001) writes, *Pedagogies of the Home* refer to the ways Chicana and Latina women develop knowledge and resistance through lived experience, cultural intuition, and familial teachings. These are

pedagogies rooted not in textbooks, but in survival, in caretaking, in intergenerational wisdom passed through *dichos*, food, and feeling. *Pedagogies of the Home* align with *Muxerista pedagogy*, a framework in which knowledge is born through relationships, emotion, and communal care.

These pedagogies are what sustained my Grandmother when she was silenced, what shaped my Mother's teaching within our home, where she passed down lessons of resilience, language, and care, and what grounded me in writing this very piece. They are forms of *spirit restoration* practiced daily, small rebellions that transform domestic space into sacred space. They remind us that even when institutions reject us, the home has already taught us everything we need to know, lessons rooted in what Yosso (2005) identifies as *community cultural wealth*, a living archive of resistance and survival.

The shame we were made to feel was never ours to carry. What we were told was "unprofessional" was, in fact, deeply political, emotional, and pedagogical. Everyday practices, speaking Spanglish in classrooms, remembering recipes while writing theory, or teaching with compassion because we know what it feels like to be othered, are not separate from scholarship; they are its pulse. These practices constitute a distinct epistemology rooted in lived experience. *Pedagogies of the Home* not only name this, but they also validate it. They tell us: You were always teaching. You were always learning. Even when no one called it that, in honoring these teachings, we remember that home is our first abolitionist classroom, a space where love itself becomes a revolutionary act.

Abolitionist Work as Inheritance

In many ways, the women in my family practiced abolition long before we had the language for it. Their lives were grounded in a refusal, not only of institutions that devalued their knowledge, but of a world that asked them to erase who they were to survive within it. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore reminds us, "abolition is about presence, not absence. It is about building life-affirming institutions" (Highline College Library, n.d.). The stories I have shared here of labor, healing, language, and spirit are not only stories of survival but blueprints for creating life-affirming worlds.

When my Grandmother chose care over bitterness, when my Mother insisted her family deserved to be seen, and when I write our names into theory, we are enacting what Gilmore calls "life in rehearsal." These are the everyday rehearsals of abolition, where we cultivate love, kinship, and healing in ways that reject disposability. Our care work, like our

storytelling, is an abolitionist act. It dismantles the logic of punishment and replaces it with the labor of restoration.

This is not just memory work; it is futurism. It is the ongoing practice of imagining otherwise, of dreaming a world where our survival is not shaped by suffering. As Mariame Kaba teaches us, hope is a discipline, something we return to again and again, even when conditions do not yet allow us to live freely (Sonenstein & Wilson, 2020). My Grandmother's life, her refusal to remain at the base of the systems that tried to keep her down, is a testament to that discipline. In a recent conversation, she shared these words with me, words I now carry forward as both guidance and prayer:

“Estamos en la cima; no más necesitas llegar. El camino es como una montaña: vas de un lugar a otro y subes más. Pero tú quieres subir hasta arriba. Entonces, yo quiero que llegues a la cima y que prosperes.”

“We are at the peak—you just need to get there. The journey is like a mountain: you go from one place to another, and you climb more. But you want to reach the very top. And so, I want you to reach that peak and prosper.”

Her words are not just encouragement; they are a vision, a roadmap. In them, I hear the *Coyolxauhqui* imperative, the call to become more radiant through our fragmentation. I hear the echo of Muxerista pedagogy, spirit restoration, and Pedagogies of the Home. I hear a directive to imagine otherwise, to build something more whole, more honest, more ours.

We practice abolition through teaching, caregiving, and refusing despair. It is how we live. It is in our teaching, our caregiving, our refusal to let despair take root. The women in my lineage have taught me that abolition is a practice of presence, a commitment to choosing love when the world offers indifference, to building wholeness where there was once harm.

As the future of Latinas moves forward, we are not only capable of surviving the world we were given, but we are meant to remake it. Therefore, this story, this offering, is not just mine. It belongs to all those who mother, teach, heal, and imagine us into being. It is a love letter to the past, a blueprint for the present, and an invitation for those who will continue the work of remaking the world with tenderness and truth. If life grants me the gift of nurturing a new generation of my own, I will devote myself to continuing this work, to planting the lessons of my Grandmother and Mother in the hearts of those still learning how to bloom.

We Heal As We Become

This work is not a reflection of the past. It is a continuation of the futures my Grandmother and Mother dreamed into being. Through their stories, I trace a genealogy of spirit restoration rooted in Muxerista pedagogy, testimonios, and abolitionist imagination. These are not simply theoretical frameworks. They are lifelines, born of love, labor, and refusal. Across generations, we have resisted erasure by nurturing one another through *apapachadas*, by turning home knowledge into scholarly intervention, and by refusing to let institutions define the limits of our worth.

As I walk forward, I carry the dreams reimagined by the women who came before me. They are my spirit restorers and spirit protectors. Their wisdom echoes through my bones, their stories shape my theory, and their care restores my *alma*. Through them, I have learned that becoming is not the end of heartbreak but the act of reassembling ourselves through love, faith, and imagination. This is what it means to heal, to transform pain into practice, memory into movement, and loss into language.

Muxerista pedagogy lives through us. It teaches that healing and theorizing are not separate acts but shared rituals of restoration. The women in my lineage have shown me that education, care, and imagination are abolitionist labors. Each *apapachada*, each story, each refusal to be silenced is a lesson in how to build a freer world. As we move together toward that world, I carry forward this truth: we heal as we become. Not alone, but alongside one another. In our becoming, we write new maps of liberation, and with every act of tenderness, we restore the world to itself.

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Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue 2

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue, Part 2

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

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***In the Midst of Academia: Honoring Our Chola-Muxerista
Matriarchs***

Josie Garcia

University of Arizona

Olga Estrada, PhD

University of Texas at San Antonio

In the Midst of Academia: Honoring Our *Chola-Muxerista* Matriarchs

Josie Garcia

University of Arizona

Olga Estrada, PhD

University of Texas at San Antonio

Abstract

This collaborative paper is an exploration of two Chican(a/x) PhD students' *testimonios* honoring their *Chola-Muxerista* femtors, Dr. Marie “Keta” Miranda and Dr. Gloria V. Gonzáles, whose teachings and *Chola-Muxerista* wisdom are rooted in collective self-preservation, sisterhood, and care. We interweave embodied methodologies and pedagogies of critical *chisme* and *pláticas*, grounded in *autohistoria-teoría* and the *cenote* as an inner geography of memory, to creatively and intellectually map our struggles within the extractive conditions of the neoliberal academy.

This paper expands on Revilla's (2004; 2022) and Orozco's (2025) *Muxerista* and *Jotería* principles, which are grounded in our *Chola-Muxerista* praxis that centers self-preservation, reciprocity, consent, and solidarity. Our visual and written *testimonios* are a healing praxis of slowing down and sifting through the painful and joyful memories. We write this as a loving effort to preserve collective memory, archive, and speak from the margins of academic isolation, competition, and exhaustion. By centering embodied knowledge, relational care, and creative survival, we share the lessons, *consejos*, and life-giving affirmations that sustain our friendship and academic *sobrevivencia* while resisting the extractive logics of the neoliberal academy.

Key Words: *Chola-Muxerista* praxis, Matriarchs, Critical *Chisme*, Sisterhood, Mexican American Studies

Introduction

"Even islands come to [National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS)] conferences—perhaps they come to find other islands" —(Anzaldúa, 1998, p. 149).

In the *palabras* of our *Jotería Chola-Muxerista* ancestor Gloria E. Anzaldúa (1998), her reflections on coalition building theorize and reimagine the *neonatal* body as both an island and a bridge—a site of relational, transformative, and healing possibility. As working-class Chicana/x doctoral students, we deeply resonate with Anzaldúa's reference to isolation as island positionality (Pitts, 2021). The island is more than a metaphor; it is an embodied knowledge of self and collective preservation that creates pathways to solidarity or isolation.

Our interpretation of the island's nonhierarchical cycles of *conocimiento* (awareness) (Anzaldúa, 2015) teaches us to breathe through burnout and to be present in connection, retreat, reflection, and restoration. The island, like the bridge, aligns with what we call *Chola-Muxerista* praxis, which reminds us of the importance of carving out intentional time and space to remember and honor our living academic matriarchs. We are deeply grateful to our *femtors* for the life-long lessons of reciprocity, rest, and renewal. These are practices we now share in our ecosystem—family, students, friends, and colleagues.

Preparing to leave the island, the bridge teaches us that connection requires taking a risk, a leap of faith into initiating a political friendship. The practice of our sisterhood is rooted in the belief that relationships take time to nourish, require embodied presence, *confianza*, and love to flourish. Our Chicana/x sisterhood ethics are shaped by our mutual longing to survive, to teach resilience, and to weave a sustainable bond amid the suffocating conditions of neoliberal and necropolitical violence (Mbembe, 2019; Puar, 2017). It was in the midst of organizing the 2019 Mexican American Studies Teachers' Academy (MAS.TA) that we crossed paths. When we first met, neither of us expected a car ride together across town would flourish into a life-affirming bond.

Pásale, the Back Door is Abierta

This paper is an invitation to cruise through the back alleys of academia with us. We invite you to be dragged and join us through the back door of the institution. "*Pásale*", enter

with us, we invite you to some *cafecito*, *pan dulce* y un poco de critical *chisme*¹ (Gonzalez et al., 2023; Gonzalez Ybarra & Player, 2024). Please, excuse our *merger* of book bags, piles of books, peer-reviewed articles, y *los* crunchy snacks. We show up with our *panzas* in panic, burned out, disheveled, hungry, and thirsty for a space of authentic connection and sisterhood where we can truly drip in our authenticity.

The institution is not an ideal space for kickin' it, *pero siéntate*, sit down, and let us first discuss some agreements. We need to strive for collective care; *tírale pal otro lado* the individualism, competitiveness, and extractivist values of the neoliberal academy. It's about the collective, self-preservation, and sustainability of our *gente* and all our communities. We need our *Muxeristoria* now more than ever, due to the political climate; consolidation of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality Studies departments; anti-immigration raids; scrubbing of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) language; banning of books; and anti-LGBTQ legislation. This is a space of love, *respeto*, street cred, and solidarity. We draw from Revilla's (2004; 2022) and Orozco's (2025) *Muxerista* and *Jotería* frameworks to further develop *Muxerista* femtoring principles (Garcia et al., 2024), continuing to shape our ever-evolving collective *conocimiento*. These include: 1) sense of belonging, 2) a safe space, 3) *confianza*, 4) acts of resilience, and 5) communal responsibility. Despite coming from completely different universities and geographies, like separate islands shaped by our own storms, as castaways, we miraculously crossed paths, found each other, and community. During the past couple of years, we have had numerous heartfelt *pláticas* (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Solorzano et al., 2024) about the influence of Keta and Gloria's² *Chola-Muxerista femtorship* and grassroots *movidas*.

In her dissertation, Veronica Sandoval (2022) re-imagines Chola work and discusses groups that would not have identified as Cholas. Sandoval refers to these groups as material Cholas:

"Akin to Cholas who live in gang neighborhoods and whose socioeconomic conditions continue to be affected by their place in the nation-state, women find dignity within the

¹We use critical *chisme* to name our multiple truths by creating intentional space to speak about our deeply political lives without being dismissed for our intersecting struggles. Critical *chisme* is a relational space where we mutually undrown one another.

² Out of respect and political intimacy, we refer to our *femtors* by their first names as a gesture of nonhierarchical respect and mutuality that disrupts academic norms.

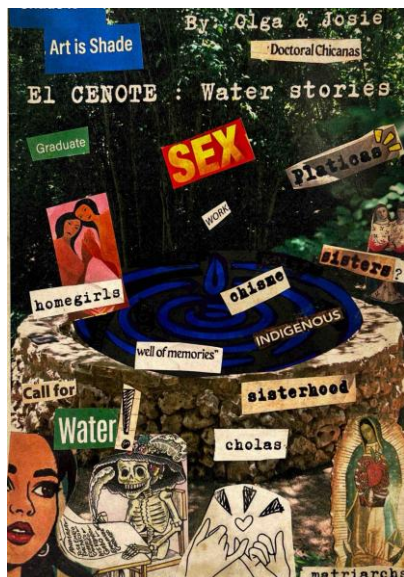
spaces that the material creates. Cholas assert their identity regardless of the discursive practices that criminalize, dismiss, and erase them” (p.52).

Following Sandoval, we understand *Chola–Muxerista* praxis as Chola work rooted in material conditions, survival strategies, and relational labor, while remaining attentive to the distinct histories of gang-affiliated Chola life. Our use of the term does not collapse or sanitize these experiences, but engages Chola as an epistemological and intergenerational lineage shaped by working-class culture, resistance, and collective care. Cholas are shaped by survival, and they are not a monolithic identity to be romanticized.

MAS-TA is a week-long summer program for K-12 teachers. Keta is the co-founder of MAS-TA, which marked its 10th anniversary during the summer of 2025. During the initial years, the teacher training program was hosted in person and served approximately a dozen educators at the former University of Texas at San Antonio’s (UTSA) Institute of Texan Cultures (ITC). Keta retired in 2019, then soon after, the pandemic abruptly disrupted our normalcy. We adapted to a virtual format of Zoom. Being pushed into the digital space meant having to rely on the *rasquache* tech skills of us graduate students. Keta retired and passed the teacher training program to her trusted colleagues, Dr. Lilliana P. Saldaña and her trusted friend, Dr. Gloria V. Gonzáles. Under their new leadership as co-directors, the MAS Teachers’ Academy experienced rapid growth, enabling us to reach more teachers across Texas and beyond. We had the privilege of working alongside these *Muxeres* and witnessing the labor of love they poured into cultivating an engaging learning environment for teachers. The last seven years have been quite a ride.

Figure 1

*El Cenote: Water Stories*³



Chola-Muxerista Framework

We introduce the Chola-Muxerista framework as a conceptual and methodological map that grounds our *cenote* stories as inner geographies of memories and *conocimiento*. This paper structurally flows across five strands: 1.) Lovingly Archiving our *Chola-Muxerista Matriarchs*, 2.) *Chola-Muxerista Praxis*: Putting the ‘Hood’ in Sisterhood, 3.) Wet Archives of Refusal, 4.) Tap Into Your Inner *Cenote*, and 5) Zine-making From the *Cenote*. Together, these strands demonstrate how our framework is living, relational, and will continue to sustain within and against the neoliberal academy.

We continue to build on foundational Chola, Chicana, *jotería*, and feminist principles that emerged from non-hierarchical work with the MAS Teachers’ Academy, other life and institutional struggles. Here we expand on our *Chola-Muxerista* principles, which are our embodied praxis:

- **Authenticity** – Being witnessed and reaffirmed without masking.
- **Reciprocity** – Mutual vulnerability, cross-talk, and energetic exchange.

³ This co-published zine combines paper collage and digital collage as a method of archiving our *Chola-Muxerista femtors*. It includes an adaptation of Gloria Anzaldúa’s *cenote* sketch, which we used to facilitate a mini-zine workshop we co-led visually. This adaptation invited *Muxeres* to pause intentionally, tap into their inner wells of memory, and engage in reflective and creative storytelling practice.

- **Collective/Self-Preservation** – Protection from burnout produced by unseen and undervalued labor.
- **Chola Wisdom** – Intergenerational survival knowledge that is lived, shared, and never gatekept, but protected.
- **Convivencia** – Intergenerational dialogue grounded in *pláticas* and critical *chisme*.
- **Making Place** – Intentional space-making in both public and private spheres.
- **Consent** – Explicit boundaries and agency regarding intellectual, creative, and emotional labor.
- **Solidarity** – Sustaining intergenerational and cross-cultural bonds.

Drawing from Anzaldúa's (1987, 2015) work on *autohistoria-teoría*, *nepantla*, and the *cenote* as an ecology of memory, we approach storytelling, visual creation, and *plática* as epistemological methods. We theorize *Chola-Muxerista* praxis as a friendship-based politics of care—an ethical practice emerging from working-class Chicana/x survival, critical *chisme*, *femtorship*, and collective/self-preservation. This piece weaves written and visual storytelling—through collage and zine-making—as interrelated practices of creation-resistance (Rodríguez, 2012, 2021) to document epistemic violence while enacting refusal, remembrance, and relational futurity. These interrelated practices do not adhere to rigid colonial structures of time or healing; instead, they call us back to the reservoir of our hearts. Our buried memories come to the surface and activate our elemental truth-telling. Our hope is to inspire others to share their water stories.

To clarify our methodological approach, we move between critical *chisme*, *pláticas*, and *testimonio* as distinct yet interwoven practices of *conocimiento* production. Critical *chisme* operates as a method of theorizing from embodiment—an informal, relational practice, in which we process institutional violence, name harm, and generate collective insight. *Pláticas*, grounded in Chicana, Latina Feminista (CLF) traditions, function as intentional spaces of reciprocal exchange, where *confianza* and relational accountability allow for deeper sharing and meaning-making (Delgado Bernal et al., 2023; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). *Autohistoria-teoría* in turn serves as a *testimonio* practice of storytelling from lived experience, transforming memory into political and epistemological *conocimiento*.

These practices move relationally rather than linearly. Through *rasquache movidas*, we document our *testimonios* while sustaining *Muxerista* praxis through acts of checking in,

returning to one another, and continuing conversations across time and space. In alignment with Hampton and Mendoza Aviña's (2023) real talk methodology, CLF *pláticas* center students and communities "over the institution," calling us to seek each other out, listen, strategize, and engage in transformative action (p. 2).

Lovingly Archiving our *Chola-Muxerista* Matriarchs

"Matriarchs do not reach their status without a deep understanding of compromise. ...[They know] the systems in place and how to survive them" –Mojica Rodriguez, 2024, p. 19.

We are taking this time to slow down. This deep pause is long overdue. To lovingly archive our most memorable experiences with our *Chola-Muxerista* matriarchs. Through our *pláticas*, we share the wisdom and lessons we have learned, which have replenished our spirits and kept us motivated during our doctoral journeys. We felt called by the words of the late Dr. Roberto "Cintli" Rodriguez in conversation with his wife of 19 years, Dr. Patrisia Gonzales:

"Patrisia and I once wrote that what is missing in our society are elder-honoring ceremonies. I now understand this more than ever: To see their eyes, to feel their hands, and to receive their blessings is beyond any words that I could possibly muster. Perhaps that is why I write; to encourage that we all honor the elders in our midst—parents, grandparents, family, neighbors...to honor their life's journey...to honor their stories and to do so while they can still know and understand that their lives have meant something" (Rodriguez, 2021, p.262).

Our moments of grief and mourning for Chicano activist, journalist, and educator Dr. Rodriguez stirred something in us—the reminder of mortality, the *susto* of loss, and the fear of forgetting. We push back on the demands of the institution in academia's fast-paced grind culture. We slow down to give flowers of gratitude and document our *testimonios* of our beloved *Chola-Muxerista* matriarchs. Our memories will become more fragmented and faded if we wait to share our stories. We worked in tandem, relying on each other to piece together the fragmented memories of the lessons, teachings, and *consejos* of our elders and the "matriarchs in the making" (Mojica Rodriguez, 2024).

Figure 2

Writing as Ceremony⁴



Chola-Muxerista Praxis: Putting the ‘Hood’ in Sisterhood

“Kickin’ it with the homegirls is the active participation of building friendship.” ...“Negotiation of time, then, becomes a primary effort requiring girls to understand each other’s restrictions, to find time when they can talk and build intimacy. While trust is one component of gang solidarity, the idea of intimacy is a greater force uniting the network” —Miranda, 2003, pp. 92-93.

This quote above is from Keta’s ethnographic work, where she disrupts dominant narratives that stereotype Cholas and homegirl culture as deviant, monolithic, or inherently conflict-driven. Instead, Keta reframes Chola sisterhood as rooted in intentional, relational labor—what she describes as the *active participation* in friendship-building. Her work emphasizes that these relationships require time, understanding, and emotional reciprocity. Making time for each other amidst structural violence and personal constraints becomes not only an act of survival but also a political and spiritual practice of life-affirming intimacy.

⁴ This visual *testimonio* honors the late Dr. Rodríguez. His writing deepened our understanding of the political importance of storytelling. A *colega* and friend of Dr. Rodríguez, Tania Pacheco, referred to him as a word healer, as he spent most of his life writing, including co-authoring a nationally syndicated column, “Column of the Americas” with Dr. Patrisia Gonzales. Their column focused on human rights.

We take up *Chola-Muxerista* praxis as a lived extension of these principles—one that moves from theory into everyday practices of relational care and collective survival. Our friendship mirrors the collective ethics taught by our *femtors*—Gloria, Keta, and others — rooted in mutual care, resilience, and co-creation.

Under the Chicano nationalist gaze, Cholas are positioned as a threat because they are perceived as nonconforming; they transgress and push against the boundaries of masculine and feminine respectability politics. Historically, Cholas have been cast as hot-tempered troublemakers—read as masculine, hypersexualized, or marked as queer for refusing heteropatriarchal norms (Parra, 2025). These narratives discipline Chola bodies and pathologize their resistance. Drawing on Black, Chicana, and queer of color critique, we understand creation, resistance, and embodiment as a form of fugitivity that moves within and against institutional containment (Chávez, 2017; Harney & Moten, 2013). *Chola-Muxerista* praxis sustains because it is an ongoing refusal of neo-liberal confinement of respectability, institutional discipline, and normative belonging.

Chola sisterhood is similarly misrepresented as lacking solidarity or existing in a constant state of *pleito*. While we refuse to romanticize sisterhood or deny its tensions, we also reject the myth that *Chola-Muxerista* relationships are inherently fractured. Many of us have had to unlearn the internalized colonization of heteronormative, nationalist, and colonial discourses that dismiss *Chola-Muxerista* praxis as excessive, unprofessional, or emotional. Yet it is precisely this working-class, *rasquache* consciousness (Sandoval, 2019, 2022; Ybarra-Frausto, 2019)—rooted in vulnerability, relational accountability, and shared struggle—that allows *Chola-Muxeristas* to co-create spaces of care, healing, and survival.

Drawing on Emma Pérez's (1999, 2022) theorization of third space as a decolonial site, we understand *Chola-Muxerista* praxis as the intentional creation of *sitio y lenguas*—sanctuary spaces where we can exist in our uncertainty, imperfection, and woundedness. These spaces are private and public, relational and political. Through our praxis, we check in on one another, share stories we have been taught to keep hidden, and cultivate pathways toward spiritual restoration. When *Chola-Muxerista* principles are broken or violated, the resulting grief signals not weakness but the depth of intimacy and care that sustain and nurture these relationships.

As academic *callejeras*, we engage critical *chisme* to interrogate systems of oppression while simultaneously tending to our nervous systems and collective well-being. Gonzalez Ybarra

and Player (2024) affirm *chisme* as a woman- and queer-of-color literacy practice that builds *confianza*, intimacy, and intergenerational solidarity. Within *Chola-Muxerista* praxis, *chisme* becomes a ritualized form of knowledge-sharing and making—one that restores *ánimo*, channels collective *coraje*, and resists academic pushout.

Chola-Muxerista praxis also takes shape through working-class forms of self-expression. Our dress, bandanas, and public displays of pride function as refusals of assimilation, challenges cultural hegemony, extractivism, and detached scholarship. These practices are not aesthetic; they are embodied declarations of survival. Our *Chola-Muxerista pláticas* are rooted in love, trust, reciprocity, all-nighters, ritual, and sisterhood solidarity—ways of staying alive and connected in institutions that were never designed to hold us.

We materialize these practices through creative forms of archiving and *concimiento*-making. The process of zine-making is an ecological memory-grounding ritual that moves from within the inner *cenote* into tangible forms.

Wet Archives of Refusal

“The Maya in Chichén Itzá, dedicated el cenote to el dios de la lluvia. Into their sacred well they threw their most precious possessions: turquoise, clay pottery, copal, virgins, and their children. Those who didn’t die were supposed to bring back the rain gods’ promise for a good or bad year. Gloria E. Anzaldúa 2015, p. 98.

Figure 3

*Refusal is Wet*⁵



In the midst of rewriting multiple drafts of this piece, we created a digital collage as we began to recollect our story. Specifically, after hearing about the demolition of the Institute of Texan Cultures (ITC) in April of 2025, we first met at the MAS academy through our *Chola–Muxerista femtors*. This digital collage above is an example of how our fragmented memory, *cultural*, and ancestral knowledge are recovered and reclaimed. As academic *callejeras*, we navigate graduate education, which demands our fast-paced, ongoing productivity while devaluing relational, intellectual, and creative labor. We work full-time, care for families and elders, and carry our scholarship across classrooms, kitchens, cars, and conference halls—often only to be judged for “not writing enough.” What remains unseen are the drafts, rewrites, spirals, and collective labor that sustain us.

Tap Into Your Inner Cenote

“Via nepantla you tap el cenote, the archetypal inner stream of consciousness, dream pool or reservoir of unconscious images and feelings stored as iconic imagery.” —Gloria E. Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 98

Following Anzaldúa (2015), we understand these relationships as rooted in inner ecologies—cenotes of memory and *conocimiento* that travel with us across borders. These

⁵ Figure 3 holds both the labor and the joy of political friendship. This collage is part of our *cenote* story, the memories and images that resurface after demolition and collapse through reflections on *Chola–Muxerista femtorship*, relational labor, and collective survival within and against neoliberal and necropolitical conditions.

cenotes hold what institutions cannot—our embodied knowledge, emotional labor, and collective survival. As Pitts (2021) argues, bodies take place, allowing intimacy, care, and solidarity to persist even when we are separated by distance and uneven academic terrains. When such relational spaces are denied, we experience what Williams (1991) names *spirit murder*, an institutional violence that Revilla (2022) argues is actively resisted through *Muxerista* and *Jotería femtorship* practices that restore spirit and protect *ánimo*.

In the *testimonios* that follow, we offer droplets of *conocimiento* of how we were watered and nourished by Keta's and Gloria's *Chola-Muxerista* praxis. They became our *cenotes*—wells of memory, story, and survival *conocimiento*. Their teachings replenished our spirits as the dry academic structures attempted to erode them.

Through this praxis, we learned that healing is slow, intergenerational, cyclical, and cannot be done alone. Even as we move *en chingas*—fragmented and spiraling—our friendship remains sacred. Though our time together is often limited as we juggle jobs, caregiving, and graduate school, we always find ways to experience joy and stay rooted. Time together often looks like brief crossings in the academic *calles*: conferences, birthday dinners, and collaborative writing projects. These moments, however fleeting, matter. They remind us that *femtorship* does not require constant presence; it requires intentionality, reciprocity, and the willingness to hold each other through shit storms.

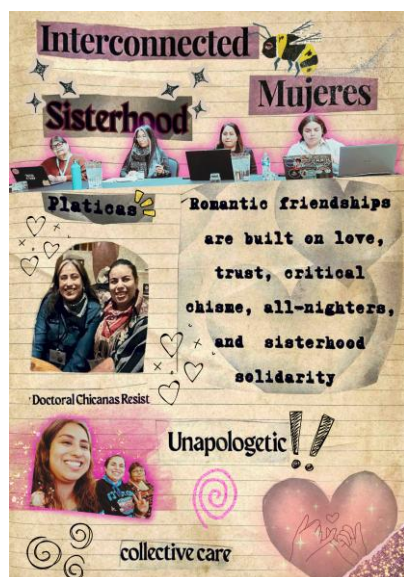
Therefore, critical *chisme* becomes a method and ritual—a site where we spit out theory that emerges from the body. We also understand archiving as an ethical practice: it matters how our stories are held and how we remember our *femtors*, rather than allowing the extractive academy to exploit and appropriate our working-class Chicana/x consciousness. This approach aligns with Revilla's (2022) reflections on *Muxerista* and *Jotería femtorship*, particularly her insistence on refusing rigid hierarchical boundaries while still honoring ethical limits. As she explains, she and her collaborators “have tried not to practice hierarchical boundaries...but we do have boundaries” (p. 199). Similarly, our zine-making praxis is grounded in relational accountability. The work of art-making and self-writing calls us to center the body in relation to place, memory, and environment. *Autohistoria-teoría* requires processes of self-recovery and deep introspection; honest creation asks for depth, vulnerability, intimacy, consent, and reciprocity. *Chola-Muxerista* praxis becomes a healing ritual for engaging care ethically, without reproducing extractive, unbounded, or dispossessing forms of relations.

Accepting the invitation to apply to La Chola Conference in 2025 brought us together to begin stitching our fragmented memories of Keta and Gloria. Sometimes we talked over Zoom and digitally collaged in Canva as our minds slowly recalled specific events. Most of the time, we met in person and worked with what we already carried in our multiple bags: printed articles, photographs, drafts of collaborative writing, magazines, conference materials, and even newspaper clippings. This slow process of building our zine across creative modalities grounded our emerging pedagogies and friendship-based politics of care. Rather than overwhelming us, the process honored where we were in our respective journeys.

Presenting at our first La Chola Conference through a workshop on honoring our *Chola–Muxerista* living ancestors was especially powerful. It was moving to witness intergenerational Cholas engage our work as a practice of remembrance—honoring Keta, a Chola matriarch who supported and *mentored* us.

Figure 4

*Interconnected Mujeres*⁶



Zine-Making From The Cenote

Through reciprocal *pláticas* and ritualized critical *chisme*, we created safe storytelling containers for checking in, sharing lived experiences, and reflecting on our evolving principles. This process unfolded as a slow grind—one that allowed us to move through heavy emotions

⁶ This collage visualizes *Chola–Muxerista femtorship* as collective care. It documents how love, *confianza*, and critical *chisme* creates sustainable pathways to surviving academia.

while remembering the care we co-created in moments of uncertainty. Together, we shared survival strategies and engaged in intergenerational wisdom.

This praxis took material form through our zine-making workshops. As part of this process, we developed prompts to guide participants in tapping into their inner *cenote*. Below are the water-grounding questions serving as an entry point into storytelling as a healing and knowledge-producing practice.

Figure 5

*El Cenote: Droplets of Conocimiento*⁷



Water-Grounding Questions

Tap into your inner *cenote*:

- Your zine is a sacred offering to the *cenote*—what would you throw in?
- Who are the matriarchs, Queer Chican(a/x)s, *femtors*, Cholas, and homegirls that live in your water memory?
- What images, colors, *palabras*, and memorias emerge to the surface?

Sweet Tear Drops of Conocimiento

Through our island positionalities, we bridge our writing together. In the same way we invited participants into our workshops to take risks, be vulnerable, and listen inward to their

⁷ Drawing from Anzaldúa's (2015) theorization of *nepantla* and the *cenote*, the image frames healing as a relational and cyclical process sustained through matriarchal *conocimiento*, collective storytelling, and wet archives of refusal.

own inner *cenote*, we hold ourselves accountable to that same practice here. These *testimonios* are our droplets of *conocimiento*. They are our sacred offerings, shaped by our willingness to sit with what surfaces and to write from it.

Our *testimonios* move like a sacred *cenote*—holding multiple depths, contradictions, and currents at once. We approach these stories with care, refusing to judge the survival strategies that emerge within them. In doing so, we affirm that vulnerability is not a demand we place on others, but a practice we commit to ourselves.

Olga's Wetty Testimonio

I came thirsty and hungry for a fresh perspective, feeling dried out in predominantly white queer spaces. Attending my first NACCS conference in San Antonio in 2013, as a queer Chicana/x undergraduate student from Colorado State University, stirred something in me. This is where I first encountered Dr. Marie “Keta” Miranda. I remember her protest signs calling urgently for the inclusion of Mexican American Studies in Texas, and her insistence that we challenge censorship and the restrictions on what universities were allowed to teach.

I still carry the black Moleskine journal I brought with me that day. I had lost my pen, and the only thing I had was a yellow highlighter. Too shy to ask for another, I filled the pages with fluorescent ink marks only visible under black light. I was a ghostly presence in those conference rooms, quiet and observant, already dripping in *Jotería* and *putería conocimiento*. I did not yet have the language to name and come into my queer skin.

That journal has traveled with me since undergrad, accumulating notes, reflections, and fragments of thought. When I reached its final pages years later, Josie and I transformed it through collage and zine-making, turning that fluorescent memory into something that could be archived, shared, and mobilized as pedagogy. We later facilitated zine-making workshops at the 2025 La Chola Conference and the El Mundo Zurdo conference, inviting participants to tap into their inner cenotes and offer droplets of memory in honor of their living Chola, *Jotería*, and *Muxerista femtors*.

Keta's *femtorship* flourished in the in-between moments, during smoke breaks, collaborative planning, and shared labor. I remember helping her set up apps on her iPad while she cooked frijoles with queso fresco and roasted green chiles. Inviting me to her home was a way for her to pay forward the labor I put into the Academy as her underpaid graduate assistant. When I was helping her move off campus, in the middle of our workday, she casually

lit a cigarette in her office. When I laughed and told her we couldn't smoke inside, she shrugged, put it out in her keychain ashtray, and kept going. That moment held humor, care, and the slow grind of relational work that never felt hierarchical or extractive.

I appreciate her telling me the day of the summer academy, "I apologize in advance, but I might start barking orders at you". Now looking back, I appreciate her self-awareness of her emotional capacity. She was forecasting, but of course, the stress was not as much then because we only had approximately 10 teachers show up that year. This was okay with Keta because there was no budget to feed more than a small cohort of teachers. I remember making sandwiches and eating tacos. Through Keta, I learned that *the Chola–Muxerista sisterhood is sustained by slow trust-building, reciprocity, and love that restore ánimo*. With her and with other Muxeres, she introduced me to Gloria and Josie. I felt submerged but breathing underwater, held by a sacred *cenote* of memory, care, and collective survival.

Deep Pause for Gratitude

Before Josie's *testimonio*, I want to pause and name her as my comrade and co-conspirator, someone I continue to find deep pleasure in collaborating with. She is the Wilson to my castaway. Our friendship has been healing in ways I did not anticipate. I often say that "ride-or-die" Chicanas can reproduce toxic forms of loyalty and silence, but with Josie, it has been nothing but genuine love, accountability, and support.

The past few years have felt like piles of grief stacked on grief as we, pandemic graduate students, navigated institutions that tried to kill our spirits. Her friendship has been a life raft I did not know I needed, and because of her, I continue to give sisterhood a try. Although our working-class, dissertating lives as students, educators, and friends spread across different geographies make communication challenging, her presence is always felt. She gives me wet hope. She reminds me that we are all working from places of burnout and that we must not compare our struggles but honor each other's capacities and hold space for each other's pace.

In that spirit, I want to thank her for all the moments she has shown up for me: my dissertation defense, my grandmother's funeral, birthday parties, late nights on Zoom, writing retreats, conferences, and the everyday chaos of my queer personal and academic life. Thank you for the gas money, the snacks, the laughs, and for trusting me with your son, even if I did teach him how to twerk. In all of this, you remind me that *Chola-Muxerista* wisdom is needed

more than ever and that our stories root us in struggle while affirming the necessity of making intentional, warm spaces that honor our truths and sustain our communities.

Josie's Testimonio: Vamos a NACCS for Genuine Connections and Life-long Relationships

I first met Gloria in 2018 in Minneapolis, MN, at the NACCS conference. We sat next to each other on a shuttle from the airport to the conference hotel. The conversation flowed as we chatted about the frigid 30-degree weather, our doctoral journeys, and research interests. At a national conference, it seemed unthinkable to learn that we're both connected to our home city, San Antonio, Texas. Gloria and I even realized we have a mutual friend, Jesus Jaime-Diaz. Jesus had transferred to a doctoral program at the University of Arizona (UA), and I met him at orientation, just days after arriving. We were both very fond of Jesus. Even after he had moved, Gloria maintained contact with him. As we exited the shuttle, she mentioned she would be part of a roundtable session with colleagues and invited me to attend. Because talking with her was like catching up with a dear friend or *comadre*, it was important to follow through with my promise.

I had arrived a few minutes early to the roundtable session, and I recall entering the room as Gloria and her colleagues were setting up. They consulted with each other and agreed to add more chairs and expand the circle formation. As I sat and skimmed the room, I was pleasantly surprised to see her approaching me. She thanked me for being at the roundtable. Her greeting seemed like a simple gesture. For me, it was memorable because she acknowledged my presence and expressed her gratitude at that moment. Her act of kindness counters conferencing norms. These initial impressions of Gloria were memorable because they felt like authentic care.

Outside of NACCS, I attended conferencing spaces that were exclusive, elite, and *pues*, well, an atmosphere of *puro* arrogance. Attending or presenting at these conferences can be performative, provoke self-doubt, and, overall, be emotionally exhausting. They can also be transactional or superficial—to scan as many business cards as possible or remain “connected” on social media. The invisible junior scholars are chasing and vying for their scholar crushes' attention. There are even massive-sized conferences, where you get lost in the sea of attendees. *Buena suerte* staying in touch. Thanks to the Creator, when Gloria and I crossed paths, it was truly a genuine connection.

This *memoria* continues at the 2018 NACCS. As I was thinking about getting to the next conference session, I saw Gloria in the hallway. She stopped me and asked which session I was headed to next. She then mischievously asked me if I wanted to step away from the conference to make a quick trip to the Mall of America. Without hesitation, I agreed to join her on what we would later call our first ‘adventure.’ I recall being entertained by the indoor amusement park and hearing people’s excitement on the rides. Like old friends, we pointed at what caught our attention and had a long conversation over lunch. I was smiling ear-to-ear in our selfie. Outside, walking to the shuttle stop, it was windy, and the cold air felt like it was jabbing and taunting our faces. We were not too concerned, though, as the shuttle would be making its way at any moment. We joked about how two *Tejanas* couldn’t hang in Minnesota’s winters. As 10 minutes turned into nearly 45 minutes, we wondered where the shuttle had gone. Gloria then asked me, “Hey, are you ok?” She said my face was turning red and looked flushed. I shrugged off the burning sensation I felt on my face to thwart any panic. We had decided to review the paper shuttle schedule that one of us had stuffed in our bags. We were devastated. We had missed the last shuttle for the day! We laughed and hurried back into the mall to defrost and wait for our Uber. That is Gloria, she’s patient and goes with the flow.

That summer of 2018 would mark another first—attending the MAS Teachers’ Academy in San Antonio. Just a few weeks before it, I received an email about the upcoming teacher professional development. I emailed Keta expressing my interest and mentioned that I had met Gloria recently at NACCS. Keta replied to me the same day and asked me to call her to discuss how I could participate in the upcoming MAS Teachers’ Academy.

After the summer of 2018, Gloria and I remained connected. There would be several more NACCS conferences that I would attend with her. In fact, Olga, Gloria, and I would later attend, co-create, and present at future NACCS conferences. In addition to supporting me throughout the doctoral journey, she and I have swapped stories about our families, planned our next adventures over lunch, and she’s been present at my celebrations and comforted me during my grief after my grandfather passed away. She always asks about my son and always seems to have a present on hand for him whenever she sees him. I get emotional thinking about Gloria’s *femtorship* and how I want to *femtor* others as she has done with me.

Chola-Matriarch in the Making: ‘She has Our Backs’

While we have discussed our *Chola mentorships* with Keta and Gloria, there is a special matriarch in the making that we must give flowers to—Dr. Lilliana Patricia Saldaña. Alongside Gloria, Lillie has been the co-director of the MAS Teachers’ Academy for the past six years. Prior to her role as co-director, Lillie had participated in the teacher training program since 2018. She has been involved with several social justice organizations, such as Somos MAS, and serves on the board of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center. Although Lillie would not call herself a Chola, she embodies *Chola-Muxerista* principles and praxis. Before Keta retired, she was strategic about who could step up to continue her legacy and vision for the MAS Teachers’ Academy. Lillie and Gloria were entrusted for several reasons—they’re *Chingonas* with the *ganas*, street cred, and reliability to lead. Similar to Keta, both Lillie and Gloria have invested numerous unpaid hours in applying for grants and organizing the various logistics required for planning the MAS Teachers’ Academy. As it grows larger, more support will be needed to continue the momentum of building MAS in Texas schools statewide. There are so many ways that Lillie is precisely a matriarch in the making. We provide some examples:

- She is fierce!
- She shows up at pop-ups, conferences, and graduate student events.
- She is willing to meet us at coffee shops and co-write together (definitely an academic *callejera*).
- She cusses. (That’s cool and that’s real)
- She has been on multiple NACCS panels with us.
- She replies to texts. (She always does!!)
- She’s a damn good cook!
- She is a storyteller who is not afraid to share her cautionary tales and her doctoral journey.
- She validates our grief and has shown up to family funerals.
- She always has our backs!
- She will ALWAYS greet you with a hug.
- She may be faculty, but she will kick it with undergraduates and graduates.
- She makes you feel so special, affirmed, and brilliant!

The Up-and-Coming of Keta's Cholas

“That overabundance of love has to flow back to yourself. Take care of yourself. We deserve to have you with us for as long as humanly possible, but we cannot have you with us if you are not taking care of your own needs. And you need to do more. Learn to say “necesito ayuda.” You are the standard, and teaching us how to live long lives is good for everyone involved. We cannot live up to your impossible standard.”—Mojica Rodriguez, 2024, p.26.

Now that we have shared our *pan dulce y cafecito*, we have to wrap up the critical *chisme*. *Lástima*, it's time to go. *Muchas gracias* for holding space to hear our *memorias*, the complex-*susto* makes us forget. It is important to return and critique the *choque* of cruising through the neoliberal institution as we try to recover and reclaim the pieces of our fragmented selves, as an act of repairing the *daño* and also remembering what continues to be healing about having *Chola-Muxeristas* that could replenish our *ánimo* and spirits. As first-generation working-class Chicana/x doctoral students, we both had a romanticized view of the process of earning a doctoral degree. If it weren't for our *Chola-Muxerista femtors*, we would still be wandering the back alleys of academia. The *Chola-Muxerista* wisdom of our academic matriarchs saved us from burnout, emotional fatigue, and losing the stamina to continue the labor of love of nurturing spaces for students, educators, and the community to learn about Chicana/x Studies.

Chola-Muxeristas are anyone who has been *femtor*ed by someone like Keta, Gloria, Lillie, or a Chola who is passionate about MAS, *Jotería*, and *Muxerista* studies. We endearingly refer to a select group of individuals as “Keta's Cholas.” Of course, we do not know if they will be at capacity when Gloria and Lillie finally retire.

To the future generations of *Chola-Muxeristas* matriarchs in the making, stay true to the principles, stay true to yourself, stay true to your word—*Tú palabra es oro*. In many ways, this is a call for Keta's *Cholas* to pull up! You will find yourself as *callejeras* in the back alleys of academia, feeling alone. Remember, our ancestors and we got your back!

Ponte dura: keep writing, making art, and telling stories. You never know when your sacred *palabra* will be medicine to comfort and heal those around you. *Ponte MAS trucha*, make faces if you have to, because advocating and fighting for Chicana/x/o studies to stay in our schools and to continue to build MAS educator confidence is hard work.

Keep being *sucia*, *necia*, if nobody told you today, *valórate*. Tap into that inner *cenote*. You do not always have to live in self-deprecation or be self-sacrificing; you just need to take a step back before you spiral out and crash. Find your *Chola-Muxerista colegas*, and cherish each tender moment with them.

Figure 6

Who will water her?⁸



⁸ This image serves as a closing offering reflecting the ongoing labor of love that it will take to continue to sustain *Chola-Muxerista conocimineto* and community.

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Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue 2

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue, Part 2

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Chicana Feminist/Muxerista Healing Justice: Pedagogical Possibilities of Transformation in the Classroom and Beyond

Nadia Zepeda, PhD

California State University, Fullerton

**Chicana Feminist/Muxerista Healing Justice:
Pedagogical Possibilities of Transformation in the Classroom and Beyond**

Nadia Zepeda, PhD

California State University, Fullerton

Abstract

This article explores integrating a Chicana feminist/Muxerista healing justice framework into the classroom, highlighting its transformative potential for both students and educators. Grounded in the intersections of social justice, ancestral knowledge, and collective care, this pedagogical approach emphasizes students' holistic well-being, considering their bodies, minds, spirits, and multiple identities. The article demonstrates how the classroom can serve as a space for liberation, community building, and critical reflection. By engaging with topics such as resting as resistance, disability justice, pleasure activism, and community accountability, students explored the possibilities of healing justice within their own lives and communities. Through creative assignments, oral histories, and interactive practices like altar-making and ancestral reconnections, students applied theoretical knowledge to envision meaningful social change. Honoring the lineage of Chicana feminist and Muxerista activists, this framework bridges community activism with academic learning, creating a model for transformative education. The article concludes by emphasizing the necessity of courses like this in Chicanx Studies to imagine care, healing, and justice as central components of social movements, while also inspiring a legacy of empowerment, resilience, and hope.

Keywords: Healing Justice, Ancestral Knowledge, Chicana feminist, Muxerista Healing

“The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy.” –bell hooks in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice for Freedom*

“Healing justice is a practice that asks people to heal each other and themselves, change the way they relate to each other, and organize themselves, and continually interrogate their tactics and interventions.” –Loretta Pyles in *Healing Justice: Holistic Self Care for Change Makers*

As an Ethnic Studies educator, my role in the classroom is to create a space where students feel seen, welcomed, and empowered to transform. As an activist-scholar, I strive to bridge community dialogues and to provide students with opportunities to envision transformative change for themselves and their communities. My work involves documenting transformative justice movements and integrating the insights gained from these experiences into my teaching practice. Conversations with activists and community elders have profoundly shaped my approach to social justice, informing my worldview. I begin with bell hooks’ (1994) powerful assertion that the classroom is “the most radical space of possibility in the academy” (p. 12). As educators, we have the unique potential to transform students, equipping them with tools to reshape their understanding of the world and themselves.

In Fall 2024, supported by the Latinx Lab for Storytelling and Social Justice, sponsored by the Mellon Grant, I launched a course on Healing Justice. This initiative encouraged faculty to transcend traditional social science models in Chicana Studies and to embrace a more intersectional humanities perspective. My participatory research and social justice activism have focused on articulating a healing justice politic, particularly through my collaboration with Mujeres de Maiz (MdM), a Chicana/Latina and Indigenous women’s activist and wellness collective founded in 1997 in East LA (Gonzalez et al., 2024). Documenting this organization and its lineage in the context of healing justice led me to explore this concept further (Zepeda, 2021). I was excited to apply the lessons I had learned in the classroom.

In *Healing Justice Lineages*, authors Page & Woodland (2023) define healing justice as “an incantation, a response to new patterns of movement and resistance; a call-and-response to our ancestors who survived colonization, slavery, and attempted genocide, healed, and transmitted a radical legacy for collective care and safety” (p.1). This framework offers a holistic perspective on transformative justice, addressing intersectional experiences while considering the body, mind, and spirit. Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2016) notes that “healing justice as a

movement and a term was created by queer and trans people of color, particularly Black and brown femmes, centering working-class, poor, disabled, and Southern/rural healers.” It is essential to note that healing justice is an intersectional framework developed by activists who envision and imagine alternative paths to justice.

I am excited to incorporate healing justice not only as a course topic but as a transformative lens through which to view the world. This article highlights the development of a healing justice framework and my Chicana feminist/Muxerista¹ healing justice politic, both within and beyond academia. My reflections demonstrate the transformative impact of this course on myself, the students, and the classroom environment. I illustrate how a Chicana feminist/Muxerista approach to healing justice can foster spaces of possibility and transformation, challenging heteropatriarchal structures and advancing healing and decolonization.

Positionality

As a first-generation queer Chicana feminist activist scholar, I found guidance and support from Chicana feminists and Muxeristas, which helped me navigate and survive the neoliberal heteropatriarchal university. This support enabled me to envision diverse possibilities for myself within academia. During my undergraduate years, I recognized the importance of advocating for intersectional perspectives, a journey that began in my early Chicana Studies classes in the early 2000s. At that time, I noticed a significant lack of representation for queer voices and women's perspectives in the curriculum, which mirrored the sexism and homophobia I encountered in organizing spaces.

In response, my friends and I founded the Chicana feminist collective, *Conciencia Femenil* (ConFem), to highlight the longstanding contributions of Chicana feminists in activism and history on our campus while addressing pressing issues of the time. ConFem organized two successful Chicana feminism conferences at Cal State in 2010 and 2011, which, unfortunately, attracted homophobic and misogynistic backlash reminiscent of the attacks faced by Chicana

¹ I use both Chicana feminist and Muxerista to highlight the important contributions Chicanas have made to feminist-of-color thought. I use Chicana feminisms to highlight early work, specifically from the late sixties and early seventies, to disrupt patriarchy in organizing spaces and scholarship. I also honor the work of Muxerista scholars, like Revilla (2022), specifically in education, who center the vision of social change while acknowledging how identity evolves and make room for all Joteria and feminist-of-color scholars and organizers.

feminists in the late sixties and early seventies. These incidents revealed systemic issues rather than isolated events (Rojas et al., 2014). Instead of ignoring the backlash, we sought to hold our departments and the university accountable for failing to create a safe environment for queer/trans individuals and women of color. We aimed to establish accountability systems within the university and national Chicana Studies organizations, such as the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) and Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS). Our efforts contributed to a special issue on Institutional Violence in *Chicana/Latina Studies*, housed under MALCS (Castañeda et al., 2014).

Although my early activism was vital and fulfilling, the urgency of the work led to burnout, as I lacked strategies for self-care. The university and my peers inflicted wounds, leaving me with *susto* from the multiple traumas I experienced. When I entered graduate school, I sought healing practices to reconnect with my spirit and recover from the academic and organizing-related wounds. This journey led me to reconnect with ancestral practices and explore sustainable organizing models. Collaborating with MdM demonstrated that we could organize while providing wellness support for both the community and ourselves (Gonzalez et al., 2024). Through my work with MdM, I aimed to trace the broader genealogy of healing and wellness in Chicana Feminist activism. The intersection of Chicana Feminist and healing justice offered a lens to understand this crucial contribution, which I termed Chicana/x Feminist Healing Justice (Zepeda, 2021).

By incorporating Muxerista into this work, I highlight the diverse ways both Chicanas feminists and Muxeristas engage in intersectional efforts to challenge heteropatriarchy within academia and beyond. In this piece, I draw on Chicana feminist and Muxerista insights to illustrate my use of healing justice in the classroom. My focus demonstrates how healing justice, both as a topic and practice, can transform the classroom into a liberatory space for all participants.

Chicana Feminist/Muxerista Epistemologies

When articulating Chicana feminist/Muxerista epistemology, it is crucial to acknowledge the foundational work of early Chicana and women of color feminists, who laid the groundwork for understanding intersectional politics (Garcia 1997; Nieto Gomez 1997; Combahee River Collective, 1986). These early feminist of color activists pioneered frameworks that contemporary women of color feminists can honor by advancing intersectional thinking.

This Bridge Called My Back, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1983), envisioned creating a space for women of color. The anthology brought women of color together to create a community through their intersectional identities. The standard analysis they shared was “difference” rather than the “sameness” that they saw in the nationalist movements and women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s. (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983). The collection created an affirming space committed to the voices of women of color and the articulation of their feminisms. The use of the word 'radical' is intentional, highlighting the transformative power of the writing by women of color. The book commits to highlighting and elevating differences and diversity by honoring the voices of the women of color writers.

The work of women of color feminists transformed the discipline of education. Their interventions created space for studying, thinking, and transforming research and the classroom. In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks (1994) emphasizes the need to view the student as the “whole” human, encompassing body, mind, and spirit (p. 14). hooks notes that knowledge does not just come from books but also from lived experiences. As educators, we battle “educational structures [that] seemed to denigrate notions of wholeness and uphold the idea of a body/mind split, one that promotes and supports compartmentalization” (p. 18). Ethnic Studies scholars strive to create transformative spaces for students, fostering environments where they can bring their whole selves, allowing for diverse perspectives, and emphasizing overall well-being. It involves understanding students' diverse experiences and allowing their full selves to enter the classroom. This means creating space for sharing ideas and experiences, recognizing the pressure they often face as students, and providing opportunities for flexibility and rest. I have a policy that allows students to use two wellness days, encouraging them to prioritize self-care throughout the semester. This way, they don't need to wait until they feel sick or overwhelmed to take a day off. Since many are first-generation students, I know their responsibilities extend beyond my course. Offering them flexibility to take a rest day during the semester supports their well-being inside and outside the classroom. Creating space for all the experiences they bring fosters a healing environment for everyone. I also emphasize the importance of rest, dedicating time to understanding and viewing rest as a form of resistance.

Chicana feminist and Muxerista scholars' contributions to the field of education have shifted many conversations. Chicana feminist education scholar, Dolores Delgado Bernal (1998), disrupts traditional paradigms by elevating Chicana feminist epistemology. She grounds

Chicana experiential knowledge as an innovative way to approach research that decenters patriarchy and whiteness. She notes, “a Chicana feminist epistemology maintains connection to Indigenous roots by embracing dualities that are necessary and complementary qualities and by challenging dichotomies that offer opposition without reconciliation” (p. 560). This approach challenges the mind/body dichotomy often perpetuated in the classroom. By elevating Indigenous and ancestral knowledge, Delgado Bernal offers a framing that allows for ambiguity and a decolonial process, creating space for possibilities and diverse voices.

Muxerista scholars, such as Anita Revilla, have produced inclusive literature on activism and pedagogy. Revilla (2022) defines 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... a Muxerista is simultaneously a Chicana/Latina[x], a feminist and activist—never just one or the other” (p. 193). Revilla views Muxerista identity as a living, ever-evolving force that makes room for everyone. Her integration of Jotería Studies, a newer subfield in Chicana studies that highlights queer/feminist epistemologies, within Muxerista definitions creates space for disruption against oppression, the celebration of queer love and joy, community love, and social change, among other aspects of Jotería Identity and Consciousness (Revilla & Santillana, 2014).

Chicana feminists and Muxeristas honor that work that has come before them and value the experiential knowledge that has laid the groundwork for this epistemology. In this vein, Chicana lesbian writer and thinker Cherrie Moraga (1983) offers the concept of “theory in the flesh” to understand the roles of knowledge producers. She writes, “A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longing—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (p. 23). Theory in the flesh uses the body as a site of knowledge that disrupts hegemonic epistemologies. By centering the experiences of Chicana feminists and Muxeristas, I aim to contribute to a body of knowledge that interrogates and expands our understanding of Chicana feminists and Muxerista pedagogy and organizing. I rely on the work of feminists of color who value everyday experiences and practices to disrupt hegemonic knowledge production. This also enables students to view their experiences as valuable contributions in the classroom, positioning them as creators of knowledge. This expansion of understanding moves away from

heteropatriarchal white supremacist narratives that harm and further alienate our communities and instead fosters moments of possibility by elevating students' experiences.

In connecting healing justice work with contemporary Chicana feminist and Muxerista healing justice, I draw on Gloria Anzaldúa's (2015) exploration of the intersections of healing, spirituality, and social justice. Anzaldúa elaborates on spiritual activism, defined as "spirituality for social change, spirituality that recognizes the many differences among us, yet insists on our commonalities and uses these commonalities as catalysts for transformation" (p. 246). She describes activism as "engaging in healing work. It means putting your hands in the dough and not merely thinking or talking about making tortillas. It means creating space and times for healing to happen, *espacios y tiempos* [spaces and times] to nourish the soul" (p. 91). Anzaldúa's writings remind us that visions of transformation in activism cannot occur without centering healing and doing the necessary work for it to take place. Incorporating healing justice in the classroom ensures that students who have felt traumatized or neglected by academia feel supported and empowered to bring their whole selves—their bodies, minds, spirits, and multiple identities—to the educational experience.

Through exploring healing justice and the contributions of Chicana feminists and Muxerista activists to healing, community care, intersectionality, and social justice activism, this article proposes a Chicana Feminist/Muxerista framework for healing justice. I assert that Chicana feminist/Muxerista healing justice, as elaborated in my other work, encompasses intersectional wholeness, community care, and healing from historical trauma (Zepeda, 2021). Healing justice is not a new phenomenon in Chicana feminist and Muxerista organizing; instead, there are numerous examples of how Chicanas and Muxeristas have merged community wellness, healing, and social justice in unique ways tailored to specific needs. Chicana feminist and Muxerista interventions aim to foster whole and healthy communities. Through lived experiences, Chicana feminists and Muxeristas vigorously decenter heteropatriarchy in social movements and classroom spaces, utilizing difference to build healing justice spaces. My work examines the impact of Chicana feminists and Muxeristas on contemporary conceptions and practices of holistic wellness and healing. Recognizing this legacy ensures that Chicanx activism continues to address community needs and intersectional experiences.

Healing Justice as a Transformative Tool for Social Justice

When envisioning community change, activists often turn to transformative justice frameworks for inspiration and guidance. Page & Woodland (2023) define transformative justice (TJ) as

an abolitionist framework that seeks to address harm, violence, and abuse without relying on interventions based on carceral strategies—punishment, retaliation, policing, surveillance, and prisons. TJ is survivor-centered and community-led and considers the context and conditions that lead to harm and violence as a result of structural oppression and generational trauma. The overall goal of TJ is to address the root causes of violence and to create the conditions for accountability, healing, and safety for victims/survivors as well as those who perpetrate harm (p.144).

To address community harm without relying on the carceral state, transformative justice activists explore strategies that extend beyond conventional understandings of violence, like the prison industrial complex, and instead propose an approach centered on community care and support. For example, a survivor-centered community accountability model that brings the community together to consider what holding someone accountable for harm can look like beyond state interventions. (Kim et al., 2011). This approach envisions practices that uproot violence and repair the harm caused, imagining new methods that rely on the community rather than the state.

In the 2010 U.S. Social Forum in Detroit, MI, artists and activists from across the nation gathered to discuss the importance of centering holistic healing in social justice movements. Participants envisioned a framework that disrupts generational trauma and violence, creating a practice that incorporates “healing inside liberation” (Page, 2010). Scholar Loretta Pyles (2018) defines healing justice as

a practice of attention and connection, a way of healing a sense of fracturedness
Alternatively, disconnection may be a result of trauma, oppressive socio-cultural narratives and practices, or the myriad ways in which humans may lose touch with each other and themselves. It is a practice that asks social practitioners of all kinds to cultivate the conditions that might allow them to feel more whole and connected to themselves, the world around them, and other human beings (xix).

Healing justice empowers us to envision a world centered on wellness that takes into account multiple intersectional identities. As a transformative justice movement, healing justice visualizes a world free from harm, prioritizing wellness and healing within communities of color. Healing justice provides a framework for envisioning social justice activism that addresses the conditions that allow communities to feel safe, live well, and thrive.

While this genealogy of healing justice is part of a larger tradition among people of color, it offers possibilities for transformation by centering community care and healing from historical trauma. This framework enables imagining movements that prioritize living well, pleasure, and healing from trauma. My intention in this piece is to bring Chicana feminists/Muxeristas into conversation with the concept of healing justice. Healing justice is crucial for Chicana studies because it fosters transformative social change across social differences, centers community wellness within social movements, and allows people to live dignified lives. It allows us to use this lens to center historically marginalized communities through an intersectional perspective. Overall, the lesson learned from healing justice enables us to envision transformation in our community by considering the multiple experiences.

The groundwork laid by women of color feminists provides alternative models for social change, crucial for envisioning a world without violence. They teach us that social justice work must rely on the community's understanding of the circumstances causing problems. As I address contemporary issues of healing justice in Chicana feminist /Muxerista organizing, it is essential to incorporate spiritual activism into discussions of social justice. Thus, I include Chicana organizing within the scope of healing justice to honor the lineage of community wellness and activism in the Chicana community. A Chicana feminist/Muxerista positionality enables an intersectional lens to understand community struggles and needs. I refer to Indigenous women and women of color to better articulate a politics of healing, utilizing their conceptualizations of healing and transformation to uncover necessary work and connect to Chicana feminist/Muxerista healing justice organizing. Through their work, I situate contemporary transformative justice forms that imagine possibilities for holistic community justice.

I employ a working definition of healing justice to develop a Chicana/Muxerista framework for healing justice. The definition encapsulates the lineage of early Chicana feminists and Muxeristas who have worked to create a community of care within their community, as

well as the efforts to center new visions of transformation, social justice activism, intersectionality, holistic wholeness, and healing from trauma through reconnecting with their ancestors. I highlight and elevate the idea that many Chicana feminists and Muxeristas have laid the groundwork for future generations to adopt a holistic and intersectional approach to social justice activism. As a scholar-activist, I must amplify the holistic activist work of contemporary Chicanas, while also honoring the genealogy of Chicana feminist/Muxerista activists, providing key insights, practices, and knowledge to current movements and activists.

Chicana Feminist/Muxerista Healing Justice in the Classroom

Part of our role as educators is to give students opportunities to explore new ideas and imagine a world without harm and oppression—a world that includes all communities, especially those historically marginalized. The classroom acts as a space for meaningful social change, and as educators, our job is to guide and support students to thrive in these environments. My social justice activism and intersectional identities deeply inform my approach to teaching.

During the fall 2024 semester, I created a classroom space where students could critically examine what transformative justice might look like in their own lives, using healing justice as the central framework. The course explored topics such as early feminist practices by women of color, resting as resistance, pleasure activism, disability justice, community accountability, reconnecting with ancestral practices, and activism. Healing justice, as envisioned by queer and trans people of color, draws on their intersecting identities to generate and share knowledge. Acknowledging that women of color feminists laid the foundation for this work, it was essential for students to engage with foundational texts and ideas.

Part of my teaching on Chicana feminist and Muxerista Healing Justice draws from interviews with activist elders. I had the privilege of interviewing Gloria Arellanes, a Chicana and Tongva elder who was deeply involved with the Brown Berets during the Chicano Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Espinoza, 2001). Sharing her story with my students demonstrated that healing justice has long been an integral part of our communities. When the state failed to provide resources, communities came together to meet their own needs. For example, Woodland (2023) highlights the Black Panthers' Free Breakfast Program, which fed children nationwide in 1969 (p. 38), and the Brown Berets' Barrio Free Clinic in East LA, led by Gloria Arellanes to provide critical medical resources to a historically marginalized

community afraid to seek care at County hospitals (Espinoza, 2001). These examples illustrate “what is possible when revolutionary care is at the center of our liberation work” (Woodland, 2023, p.39). Sharing these stories showed students the lasting legacy of community care and how activism rooted in healing can lead to real change. Gloria Arellanes also inspires students by embodying the rich history of the Chicano Movement while reconnecting with her Tongva ancestry, encouraging others to honor their own ancestral roots (Zepeda, 2021).

Rest became a central focus of our discussions, especially for first-generation students who often view rest as a luxury they cannot afford. Tricia Hersey’s (2022) *Rest as Resistance* became a pivotal text, encouraging students to see rest as a necessary act of resistance rather than an unattainable privilege. I relate to this because, as a first-generation college student and a child of immigrants, rest was not something my family practiced; my parents instilled a strong work ethic that often left me exhausted and burnt out. Being able to talk to students about the need for rest as a right rather than a reward reframed the narrative for all of us. For their final projects, some students created collages emphasizing the importance of rest within their families. They reflected on the sacrifices their parents made to ensure their survival, while also exploring ways to reclaim and document rest and joy in their daily lives.

By focusing on pleasure activism and disability justice, we explored how our bodies exist and move within different spaces. Pleasure activism encouraged students to consider how joy, pleasure, and fulfillment can play vital roles in social justice work (brown, 2019). brown talks about finding joy in activism and the need to “make the revolution irresistible” (p. 24). Therefore, the work I did with students involved recognizing joy in activism and embracing an identity as pleasure activists. At the same time, disability justice offered a framework to promote inclusivity and equity, emphasizing the importance of creating spaces where no one is left behind (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). This involves demonstrating alternative ways of caring for the community and imagining what that can look like when different abilities make navigating the world more challenging, and how, in building community, we can support each other.

We also engaged in discussions on social justice activism by imagining new models of accountability and exploring the use of art as a tool for activism. Using the community accountability framework developed by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, students learned how communities can come together to center the survivor and hold individuals accountable for harm (Kim et al., 2011). Additionally, studying *Mujeres de Maiz* allowed

students to see the power of reconnecting with ancestors and of integrating art into activism. Over its nearly 30-year history, this organization has exemplified a contemporary model of women of color feminisms (Gonzalez et al., 2024). These lessons helped students reimagine the transformative possibilities of healing justice and how it can empower their communities.

The course also included engaging with ancestral knowledge and healing from trauma. For Día de los Muertos, we built an altar to connect with ancestors and loved ones. Students brought photos of family members or objects that symbolized their inner child (Zepeda, 2019). This emotional exercise created a supportive and meaningful environment where students shared their stories and reflected on their connections to their ancestors. We also discussed family practices, such as using herbal remedies like garlic and honey for congestion, and using salt for spiritual protection. Many students took these discussions home and returned to the class with additional knowledge from their families. Before finals week, I brought herbs like lavender, lemon balm, and skullcap to class for students to explore, touch, smell, and take home to help manage stress.

I intentionally designed assignments to foster critical self-reflection and engagement. Journaling and pair-sharing helped students apply course concepts to their own lives while also allowing private introspection about new topics. A key assignment involved conducting oral histories, in which students interviewed activists or elders in their communities to explore storytelling as a means of empowerment and liberation. This assignment gave students valuable skills for connecting with their own family histories and for developing tools for future research or creative work. For their final project, students created artistic representations of their visions of healing justice, including collages, short films, poems, and other creative expressions. These projects allowed students to articulate and share their personal healing justice frameworks.

Throughout the course, I continually reflected on how educators can create transformative learning environments that consider the whole student. Many students juggle responsibilities, such as caring for family members or working full-time jobs, which can affect their ability to engage in class. To accommodate these challenges, I approached my teaching with compassion and flexibility. For example, I reached out to students who missed class to offer support. While some did not respond, others appreciated the opportunity to reconnect, overcoming feelings of shame caused by family emergencies or mental health struggles.

Additionally, I implemented wellness days, where students could take time for themselves simply by notifying me, without needing to provide an explanation.

This course was a transformative experience because students engaged with healing justice concepts and applied them meaningfully. By drawing on the diverse knowledge in their homes and cultural spaces, we created an environment that supported collective learning, growth, and healing. We concluded the semester with an art gallery that demonstrated how the course impacted students and expressed their visions of healing justice. Overall, the course served as a powerful reminder of how centering healing and social justice in the classroom can empower students and contribute to broader social transformation.

The Possibilities of Chicana feminist/Muxerista Healing Justice

Integrating a Chicana feminist/Muxerista healing justice framework into the classroom is a transformative practice that profoundly impacts both students and educators. By emphasizing intersectional wholeness, this approach considers students' bodies, minds, and spirits alongside the multiple identities they bring, creating a humanizing and empowering educational experience. By valuing students as creators of knowledge and acknowledging their expertise, the classroom becomes a space for healing and transformation. This type of learning challenges the violence perpetuated by a white supremacist, heteropatriarchal university system and seeks to undo the trauma it creates. Honoring the activists, elders, and community members who have paved the way reminds us that we are part of a long legacy of collective care and justice, showing us that we need not reinvent the wheel but instead continue its forward motion.

Creating an environment that supports exploration, critical reflection, and applied intersectional frameworks enables students to envision and enact meaningful change in their lives and communities. The course on healing justice provided students not only with theoretical tools but also with opportunities to apply these ideas through creative projects and community engagement. This approach bridges academic knowledge and real-world activism, grounding it in the rich traditions of Chicana feminist and Muxerista practices. Centering wellness, ancestral knowledge, and social justice fosters a classroom that transforms both individuals and collectives. By honoring diverse perspectives and lived experiences, the learning process becomes a catalyst for personal and communal growth.

Courses like this are essential in Chicana Studies because they allow students to imagine new possibilities for care, healing, and activism within institutions and social movements. Our

discipline was founded on the dreams and visions of young student activists in the late sixties and early seventies, and courses like this honor that legacy. This work is critical for the continued evolution of the discipline, helping students explore what meaningful transformation looks like within and beyond the university. However, one course alone cannot accomplish this; it must be part of an ongoing series of conversations. In future iterations of this class, I plan to offer workshops or *pláticas* to deepen students' understanding of the work and extend the dialogue beyond the semester.

As we continue to integrate and expand healing justice within academic spaces, we must consistently honor the contributions of those who laid the foundation for this work. By merging the lessons learned from community activism with classroom practices, we can create educational environments that do more than inform—they can heal, inspire, and empower. This commitment to transformative education prepares future generations to navigate the complexities of identity, community, and social change while building a lasting legacy of empowerment, resilience, and hope.

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Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue 2

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue, Part 2

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

Diana Solis

University of California, Riverside

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

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University of California, Riverside

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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Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue 2

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue, Part 2

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

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

Desiré G. Galvez, MEd

Second Grade Teacher, Hal Smith Elementary School

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

Desiré G. Galvez, MEd

Second Grade Teacher, Hal Smith Elementary School

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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Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue 2

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue, Part 2

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

Guest Editors

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Snapshots of Jotería-Muxerista World-Making in the Classroom

Katherine E. Coronado

California State University, Los Angeles

Snapshots of Jotería-Muxerista World-Making in the Classroom

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California State University, Los Angeles

Figure 1

Healing Inner Child Paint Party, Los Angeles, 2024



Figure 2

Senior Celebration, Los Angeles, 2026



Figure 3

Jotería-Muxerista Healing House, Los Angeles, 2024



As a Chicana lesbian muxerista scholar-activist-educator, I actively create an environment in which Muxerista and Jotería identities are evident in the classroom. Jotería world-making is my compass, so I create an environment where the classroom becomes a space for the odd, different, misfit, and queer bodies to exist (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 217-218). For this, I point to the sacred directions. These directions guide my pedagogical approaches, classroom practices, assignments, and community-building efforts. **North**-Nurture a Safe and Affirming Space for Self-Expression; **East**-Embody Inclusive & Culturally Responsive Pedagogy; **South**-Stand with Each Other through Empathy and Solidarity, and **West**-Weave Joy and Imagination Together to Foster a Space of Collective Healing.

Figure 1. This photo was taken after our *Healing Inner Child Paint Party*, which takes place mid-way through the semester. This event allows students to explore how we experience generational wounds in our families and how healing our inner child can heal them. The students, dressed in Halloween costumes, are given art supplies and offered these prompts: 1. Draw your favorite childhood memory, or 2. Draw a symbol of comfort. As they create their masterpiece, they are asked to reflect on how they can recreate those feelings as adults. Figure 2. On the last day of class, I celebrate senior students with a small graduation ceremony during class, complete with personalized certificates and leis, reminding them that their presence can transform the spaces around them. This practice honors the student in an intimate space, surrounded by peers and community. Figure 3. To affirm their identities and foster community, students have attended the Jotería-Muxerista *Healing House*, an initiative within our department that provides a dedicated space for students to rest and be creative during finals.

All of these experiences contribute to a holistic learning environment where students feel seen, supported, and encouraged to bring their whole selves into their academic work.



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Does LOVE Belong in the Classroom?

Zeltzin-Nayeli Estrada-Rodríguez

California State University, Los Angeles

Does LOVE Belong in the Classroom?

Zeltzin-Nayeli Estrada-Rodríguez

California State University, Los Angeles

An ode to “Radical Jotería-Muxerista Love in the Classroom,” by Revilla, Núñez, Santillana Blanco, & González (2022)

I am a student finishing the final month of my master’s degree.

I still remember elementary school me.

Sitting at my table of four, but feeling so alone that day

My teacher and classmates looked down at me and laughed.

It was the day I pulled my folded-up homework out of the front pocket of my ripped jeans, Because I couldn’t finish it the night before amidst domestic fears and screams.

I still remember middle school me.

Taking an exam in Mr. W’s history class,

While he looked over my notes and snickered.

Instead of talking to me privately about my troubling quotes and scribbles, He announced to the class, firmly and angrily: “Don’t treat your notes like your diary!”

I still remember high school me.

Walking proudly through the halls wearing crop tops and mini shorts,

All while falling short on my classes and homework;

Two teachers met with me to tell me I’d “get nowhere the way I was dressing and performing,” I looked down, nodded— then ran to the bathroom crying.

I am now a student finishing the final month of my master’s degree.

Where Profa Muxerista gave me and all of her students stuffed animals on our first day of class; Where Profa Poeta comforted and consoled me when she learned of troubles from my past; Here, I've learned the classroom is not just a place of discomfort, worry, and obedience; Here, I've learned the classroom is a place of learning, joy, healing, acceptance, fun, and LOVE.



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XxicanXx Ancestor Testimonio

Osa T. Hidalgo de la Riva, PhD

Queer Chicana Artist, Writer, and Scholar

Bianca Quintanilla Melton, PhD

University of Texas at Austin

XxicanXx Ancestor Testimonio

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Abstract

“XxicanXx Ancestor Testimonio” is a photo essay in which Drs. Hidalgo de la Riva and Quintanilla Melton reflect upon the Muxerista pedagogy of Celia de la Riva Rubio, a Chicana educator and activist in the East Bay, California, during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Drawing from de la Riva Rubio’s example and their own experiences in education, Hidalgo de la Riva and Quintanilla argue that Muxerista pedagogy is an intergenerational and archival praxis that lives in family memory and community. Muxerista pedagogy remains relevant as a praxis of resistance when access to education is fraught.

Keywords: Muxerista pedagogy, Chicana educational histories, intergenerational knowledge, testimonio and archives, educational resistance

Introduction

Royal Eagle Bear Productions (directed by Dr. Osa Hidalgo de la Riva), in partnership with the Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective (directed by Dr. María Cotera), recently acquired archival images from Celia de la Riva Rubio, a Chicana educator and activist in the East Bay, California, during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.¹ Towards the end of de la Riva Rubio's life, she published a collection of her poetry and essays, *Lagrimas y Cadenas/Chains and Tears: Gay Feminist Prose and Poetry*, in which she self-identified as a "homophile." This photo-essay argues that Muxerista pedagogy is an intergenerational and archival praxis that lives in family memory and community struggle. Through Tía Celia's photographs, poetry, and teaching legacy, we demonstrate that Muxerista pedagogy and praxis are a living lineage of queer Chicana feminist liberation-building. Let us begin by introducing ourselves.

Osa T. Hidalgo de la Riva

Dr. Osa T. Hidalgo de la Riva (b. 1954) is a lesbiana XxicanxX artist, writer, and public scholar whose work bridges analog and digital technologies to preserve and celebrate Chicana feminista and queer cultural legacies. I began creating poetry on a typewriter gifted by my paternal Aunt, Estela Hidalgo Ruiz, and documenting family life with a Polaroid camera. A lifelong activist and cultural worker, I draw on intergenerational memory, activism, and digital humanities to honor her family's contributions to Chicana movements. Known for my hybrid creative scholarship, I embody love as a decolonizing force in digital storytelling and in my Muxerista moviemaking, movies that envision matrilineal, *lesbiana* utopias. Since 2022, I have been working with the Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective to digitize the Mujeres de la Riva collection and bring scholarly and public attention to its historical importance for women of color and queer genealogies.²

¹ In 2023 Chicana por mi Raza (CPMR) led a field school at UC Santa Cruz focused on the digitization of the Mujeres de la Riva archive preserved by Dr. Osa Hidalgo de la Riva in multiple storage units. After the field school, it was determined that Celia de la Riva Rubio's book, *Lagrimas y Cadenas* should be republished and that her personal archive in Morelia, Michoacan, Mexico, would be recovered and digitized by CPMR. In the summer of 2026 the CPMR research team (Dr. María Cotera, Analía Fierro, María Pérez, and Penelope Quetzal Wright Cotera) returned to Santa Cruz for two weeks to digitize materials collected in Morelia the year before (2025) by Osa and Sylvia Morales. Over 3000 materials from Celia de la Riva Rubio's collection were scanned during this research trip.

² This work has been supported by multiple institutions and organizations, including the US Latinx Digital Humanities grant (University of Houston) that started the digitization process of the mujeres de la Riva archive with Erendina Delgadillo from Oakland Museum of Art. The 2023 Legacy Artist Fellowship from the California Arts Council and the Arts Council, Santa Cruz served as a fiscal sponsor. UC Santa Cruz Film and Digital Media,

My Aunt Sally/Tía Celia was the Vice President of the Association of Mexican American Educators (AMAE). We include photos of my collection of XxicanxX³ *lesbiana* poetry, as well as samples of the publications by the other womxn⁴ members of the de la Riva family. I have introduced Bianca (my co-author) to a wider community of Chicana/e/x⁵ scholars and activists through our collaboration. While I have herstorically used the term *Mujerista* to identify my filmwork and activism, after reading the work of Revilla (2004, 2021), I am now adopting the *Muxerista* spelling with an “x” over *Mujerista* with a “j” in my work. *Muxerista* is a living term, and we have barely scratched the surface, but we are energized to teach and learn.

Bianca Quintanilla Melton

In my third year of graduate school at UT Austin, I took the course “Chicana Feminisms” taught by Dr. María Cotera. “Chicana Feminisms” demonstrated that I must thank the Chicana activists who came before me for expanding educational access for girls like me growing up in South Texas. When Gloria Anzaldúa was a doctoral student in the Program of Comparative Literature at UT Austin forty years ago, she wanted to write a dissertation on Chicano literature and Chicana feminism. However, she was forced to leave because her advisors deemed Chicano culture and politics as an invalid area of study. During the past seven years, I benefited from a supportive committee of advisors who encouraged me to develop my project on Chicana allegory.⁶

A decisive moment in my dissertation journey occurred in Dr. Cotera’s course. Dr. Osa Hidalgo de la Riva joined the class as a guest speaker on a fateful day. The screening of her *Mujería* film trilogy lingered in my mind, but I would not understand why until years later. The connection between Osa’s work and that of the other authors in my dissertation — Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Sandra Cisneros — gradually became clearer as I

the Dolores Huerta Latinx Center, Library Special Collections, and the community, particularly Barrios Unidos of Santa Cruz supported Osa’s work as well. <https://chicanapormiraza.org/content/las-mujeres-de-la-riva>

³ Osa exercises poetic license through her creative spelling choices.

⁴ As an example of Osa’s creative spelling choices, womxn is distinct from “womyn,” a feminist term that was intended to de-center men but has also been criticized for excluding trans women by positing that “real” women have female genitalia. Rather than associate ourselves with middle-class white feminism which has propagated anti-trans rhetoric, we prefer the more inclusive “womxn.”

⁵ The terms Chicanx and Chicane have come into use because the traditional spellings of Chicano and Chicana reinforce the gender binary. Chicanx and Chicane signal inclusivity towards gender-expansive individuals.

⁶ I devote a chapter of my dissertation, “Chicana Allegory: The Politics of Myth and Identity in Literature and Film” (2025), to an examination of Dr. Hidalgo de la Riva’s genealogical engagement with allegory.

continued to study the *Mujería* films and developed a friendship with Osa. Like the other figures I study, Osa finds inspiration in pre-Columbian goddesses. What sets Osa's work apart is that it emerges from a family that encourages creativity and community involvement. A research grant funded my travel to Santa Cruz, CA, to interview Osa, and there I got to spend more time with her and understand how she carries on the family tradition of living by *mujerista* (muxerista) principles. Derived from Black feminist Alice Walker's concept of "womanism," *mujerista* (muxerista) refers to women who love other women sexually and/or nonsexually and create art for individual and collective liberation (de la Riva 6). As we shall see in Osa's selection of family photos, her Aunt Sally/Tía Celia was an SF East Bay Area Chicana educator who empowered, supported, and advocated for generations of Asian American, Black, and Chicana/Latina/o students. In Osa's dissertation, she enumerates seven Muxerista principles⁷; while they are geared toward filmmaking, they are also generally relevant to the creative process. Osa's Muxerista principles align with Revilla's (2004) formulation of Muxerista pedagogy and praxis. According to Revilla, "a *muxerista* is a person whose identity is rooted in a Chicana/Latina feminist vision for social change committed to ending all forms of oppression, including but not limited to racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and citizenism" (48). Muxerista pedagogies intertwine education with activism, performed by individuals or groups to better their communities. Muxerista pedagogies are situated within the lineage of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968). Osa's and Revilla's pedagogy explicitly rejects the "banking" paradigm in which the educator transfers their knowledge to the student. To conceive of the student's mind as an empty vessel filled with inert facts impoverishes knowledge. This banking paradigm does a

⁷ The Muxerista Moviemaking principles read as follows: "Number one, the Muxerista filmmaker loves herself unconditionally and often radically. She is [a] woman-identified woman whether she has experienced emotional or physical intimacy with another woman. The Alice Walker definition says, 'A woman who loves herself loves other women sexually and/or nonsexually.' Number two is getting the job done, willfully, using nonconventional methods, those outside of the traditional Hollywood studio system. It is the successful production and aim towards the liberation of self and others. It is focused on making access to technology by any means necessary, its ideology informs its praxis, its praxis or methodology is informed by a responsible set of personal politics, this is always in flux, changing and transforming with the changing times. Number three: Muxerista movies are educational but in a nontraditional sense, not indoctrinating or subordinating all people to a WASP patriarchal mindset and hegemony. Rather, they offer transformational experience about people, events, issues, and points of view usually not dealt with, underrepresented, and misrepresented in mainstream media. Fourth, Muxerista filmmakers are activists in nature and reclaim our stories from a women-of-color and children-of-color POV. Fifth, familia is inclusive of all peoples, ages, religions, colors, abilities, classes, genders, and sexualities. Six is teaching others and including our communities in the production process as crew members. Seven, taking risks, being outlaws to create change and transformations for healthy beings" (de la Riva and Blackwell 2022, 222).

disservice to students by failing to consider them as individuals who enter the classroom with unique perspectives, life experiences, and educational backgrounds. Instead of treating her students as passive recipients of information, Tía Celia cultivated classrooms where students' lived experiences shaped the curriculum, inviting them to write, reflect, and see their own communities as worthy of study. Knowledge did not flow in one direction from teacher to student, but circulated as shared inquiry and collective growth.

Muxerista principles conceive of knowledge creation as a collaborative process that activates a shared consciousness among teachers and students. Because Revilla and de la Riva's frameworks of inclusivity resist normative principles of knowledge, they expand what can be considered knowledge. Furthermore, the anti-hierarchical impulse of Muxerista pedagogies is perhaps one of the best defenses against efforts to eradicate modes of resistance to oppression.

Muxerista pedagogies are more relevant than ever, given that education and access to it are fiercely contested. The elimination of the departments of ethnic studies, gender and sexuality studies, and comparative literature across the country underscores the urgency of understanding how Aunt Sally/Tía Celia used creativity to liberate herself and her students. As a self-described "homophile," Tia Celia used poetry to express a part of herself that had remained closeted due to anti-homosexuality laws for most of her life. As an educator, she helped her students develop their minds and claim their agency. Aunt Sally's example reminds us that freedoms are never won in perpetuity, but are a never-ending struggle.⁸

⁸ While there is scant scholarship documenting the Muxeres de la Riva's writing, activism and culture work, María Cotera's recent book, Fleshing the Archive: An Intimate Genealogy of Chicana Knowledge Praxis (University of Texas Press, 2026) devotes an entire chapter to documenting this queer genealogy of Muxerista praxis.

Figure 1

Aunt Sally, c. 1960s



Figure 2

Aunt Sally's membership card as Vice President of the Association of Mexican American Educators, in Stockton, CA, (date unknown)

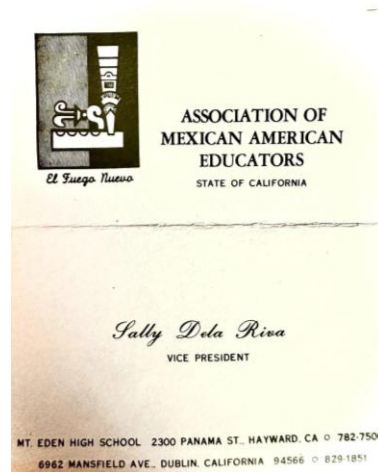


Figure 3

Aunt Sally and her car, c. 1960s-1970s?



Saturday, June 21, 2025-10 am, Osa Bear free(w)Rite with Augie Robles, UCSF Mt. Zion Hospital.

I talked with folks who invited me to publish some essays this week. Of course, my eyes were open, and my heart was ready. Let me recall the excitement, the honor, and the good work. I think of the basic story part A: to gather, excavate, and collect the *papeles*, images, buttons, and memorabilia of Tía Celia's life, work, and play. It has been a challenge – juggling

personal health issues – and making material (wo)manifest, mixing Morelia, Michoacán, México, with the merriment of rainbow-colored San Panchita, Califas, Aztlán, during Pride Month. Girlie – let your head spin that for a while.

The nurse assistant comes in as I go away with my friend, this Saturday morning. The morning is just right, bright, and ready for more poems, prayers, and promises. My thought progression flies from this personal pen, pleasing my sensory perceptions across this page as I think about or long for home. It won't be long, as I await an unexpected ultrasound. In the meantime, I disconnected from the local TV station's electromagnetic antenna waves.

The latest rave is that my niece Liliana is practicing her daily road-rage bursts of impatience and foul language across the ages; all to say, that child drives now, responsibly. She is learning what it means to pay her rent and car note, fill her car's gas tank, pay auto insurance, and keep her eyes on the road. An early 8:05 am call informs me she's camping over at my home for a few days, while her mama, my baby sister Laura, remakes her casita by city, county, and state codes and ordinances.

And then there are the happenstances that take us to distant lands to bring the wealth from the late great tía Celia's hands, heart, and mind – from there to here, do you understand? As this is told in honest conversations.

Just this morning on local news KRON 4 - the SF Bay Area, has a section on how asshole RUMP is going to target (especially Califas) curriculum for queer, gay, LGBTQIA+ youth. When it seems like we barely come closer to attending to the special youth, with special needs, the government, which is NOT my government, takes away funding for programs that are currently helping and healing the hearts and hands of youth born with two-spirits and sensibilities we all need to grow with. But noooOOOoo, estúpido is so f+^%*ing afraid of difference, so scared of the sacred world of diversity. Pendejó – so limited to one-dimensional staleness. But time will tell. We've gone this route before. As bigger bombs continue to fall, I am on my way to talk with the goddesses. Timely conversations save our nations, and yes, our special children.

When I was a child, I remember painting a little tiny suitcase with brightly colored hearts, a sun, and other simple symbols we've known across the ages. I realize Tía Celia specifically left that message for me to eventually re-encounter. To my great surprise, only recently, after so many decades of separation, I opened its old latch, an antique archival object

of Tía Celia's. I didn't even know she had kept it this many times and in so many places. Upon opening it, I gasped! It was overflowing with black-and-white *fotos* from the past! The majority were images of her students, her "gang," and other jewels. JACKPOT!

Her first teaching experience was a little Chinese kindergarten class in old Oaktown, Chinatown. The babies were already 4 or 5 years old, and the back of the photos was labeled 1953! Older than me - at 70 years old, and since I was retouching what Tia touched today in 2025, I was having a sacred pedagogical conversation with my queer Latinx/e, XxicanXx ancestor.

Figure 4

Osa's students in East LA, CA, c. 1980



Figure 5

Poet-teacher Osa and students in Stockton, CA, c. 1980



Figure 6

Aunt Sally teaching Social Studies to her students (date unknown)



Figure 7

Cover art and poem by Mama Lola de la Riva

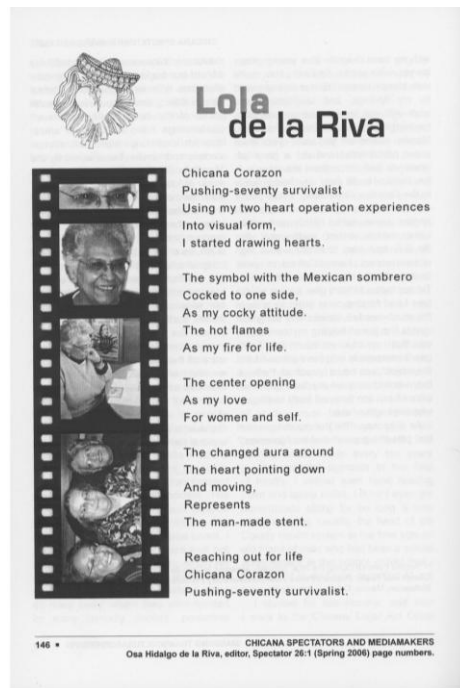
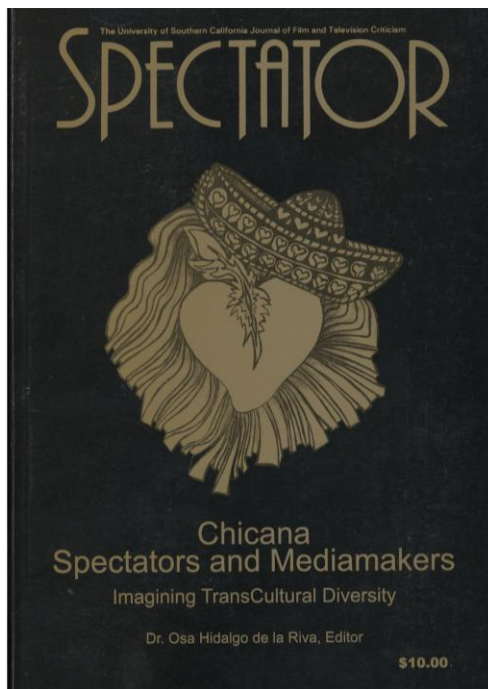


Figure 8

Aunt Sally's collection of poetry and prose, *Lágrimas y Cadenas* (1994)

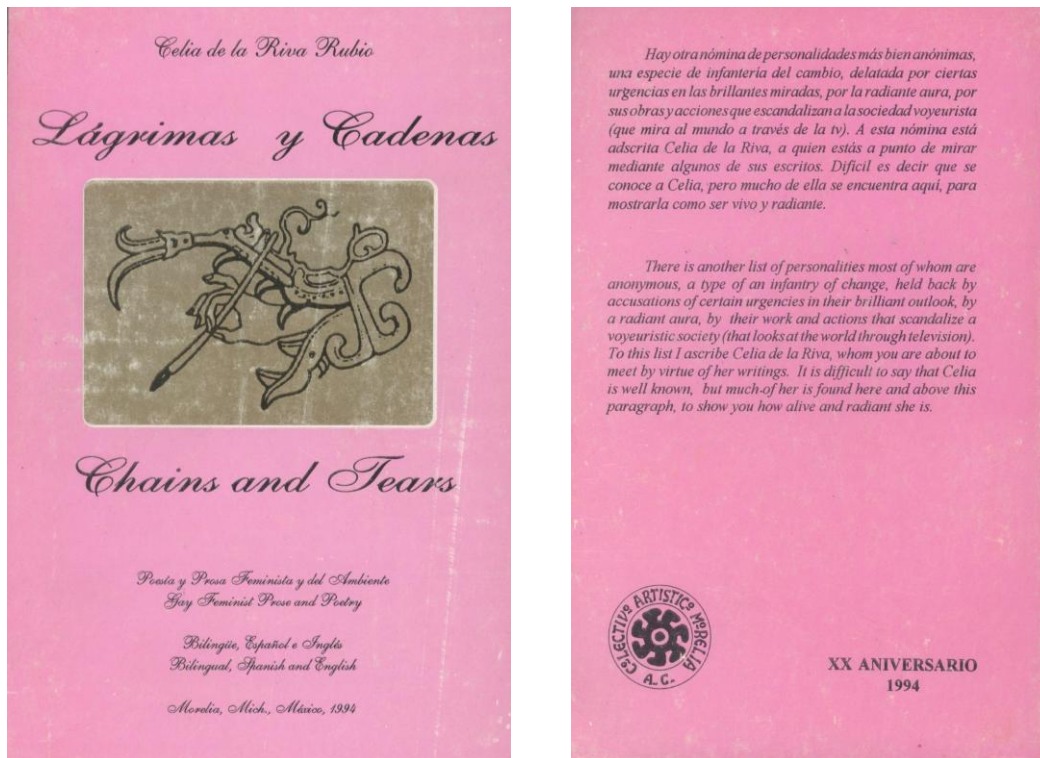


Figure 9

Aunt Sally's poem in *Lágrimas y Cadenas* is dedicated to her nieces, Osa Bear and Liz Hidalgo de la Riva

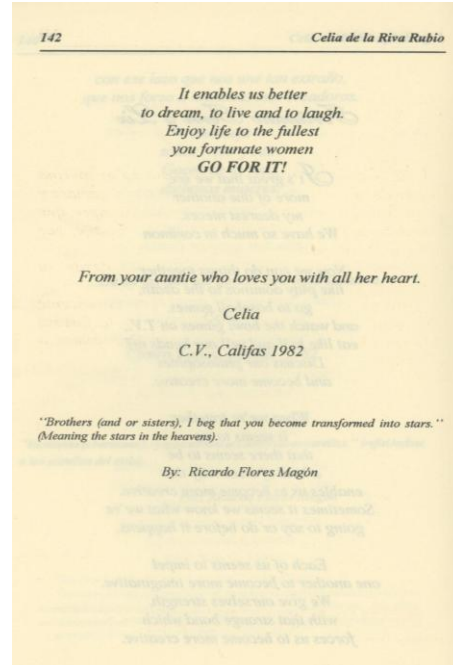
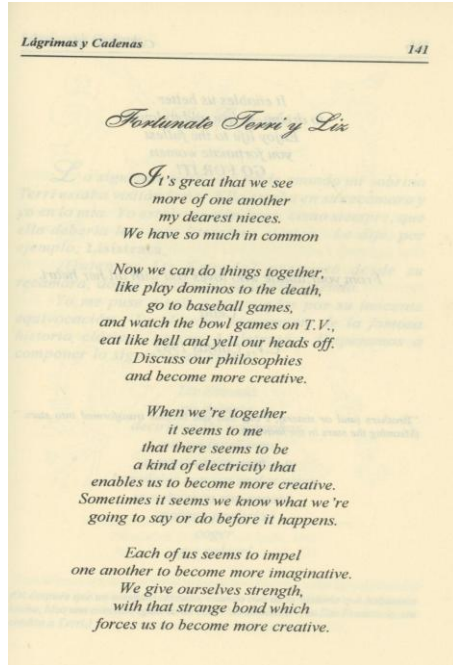


Figure 10

Liz Hidalgo de la Riva's collection of poetry was published in 1976, when she was 16 years old

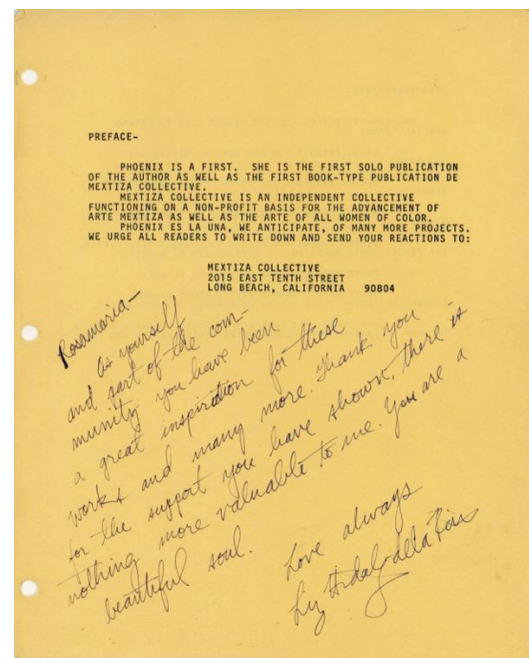
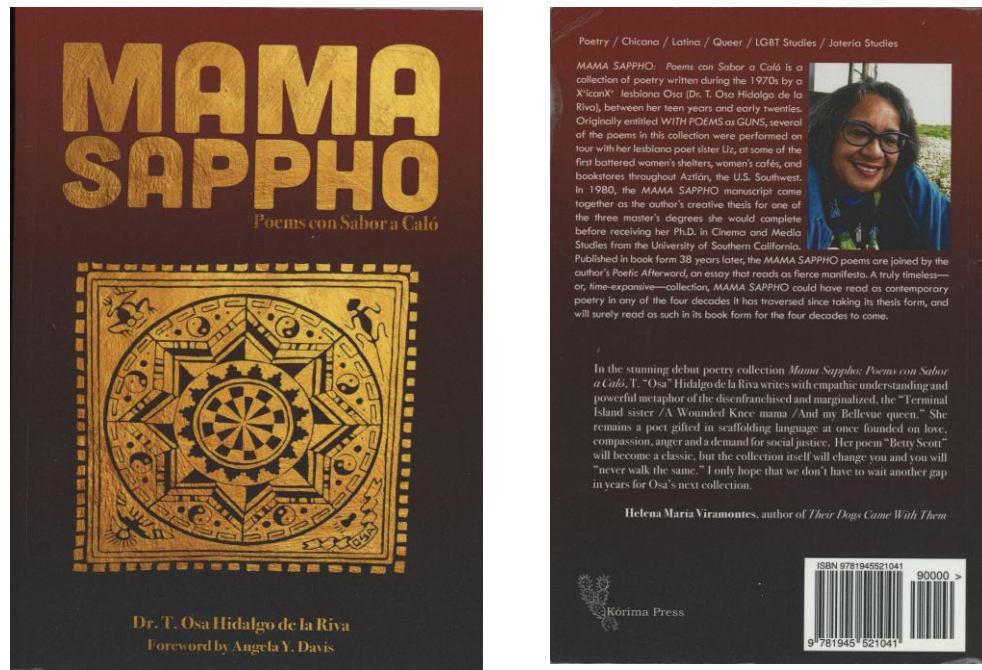


Figure 11

Osa's collection of poetry, *Mama Sappho: Poems con Sabor a Caló* (2018). Submitted initially as her master's thesis in the English/Creative Writing Program at SF State University in 1980, with a Foreword by Angela Y. Davis.



Conclusion

Although Mujerista and Muxerista have different origins, both are grounded in the principles of Women of Color feminisms. These pedagogical frameworks were developed through distinct yet overlapping trajectories. They reflect a shared liberatory consciousness committed to collective transformation. Naming this shared foundation situates Tía Celia's archival legacy within a broader intergenerational tradition of queer Chicana feminista praxis.

The depths of Aunt Sally/Tía Celia's archives have yet to be fully excavated. When Osa reopened the painted suitcase and encountered decades-old photographs of her aunt's students, she entered into a muxerista pedagogy dialogue across time. The archive became a classroom where ancestors and descendants engaged and learned from each other. As we continue to gather and interpret Tía Celia's archives, we recognize that this work is activating a living Muxerista consciousness. Her photographs, poems, and pedagogical commitments remind

us that queer Muxerista praxis has always flourished in classrooms, kitchens, community centers, and quiet acts of courage. In honoring her legacy, we reaffirm that Muxerista archives are not relics of the past. They are urgent, evolving practices of collective liberation.⁹

⁹ We would like to thank Chicana por Mi Raza for digitizing these images; Analía Fierro for helping retrieve the graphics; Sylvia Morales for helping bring Aunt Sally's archives back to California in May 2025; Vanessa Nava for her online Muxerista syllabus. The graphics on the cover of *Phoenix* were designed by Osa's sister Liz Hidalgo de la Riva in 1976; thanks to Chandler Melton for traveling with me, Bianca, from Austin to Santa Cruz to interview Osa. We dedicate this pedagogical Muxerista photo essay to Mama Lola Chola de la Riva c/s ¡Sí Se Puede!

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Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue 2

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue, Part 2

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

Guest Editors

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Muxerista Reflexiones and 2025 Nuestra Graduation Ceremony

Leda Ramos, MFA

California State University, Los Angeles

Muxerista Reflexiones and 2025 Nuestra Graduation Ceremony

Leda Ramos, MFA

California State University, Los Angeles

Abstract

This article is a Muxerista-historia of Leda Ramos, a local Los Angeles artist, activist, and educator. In this piece, she begins by tracing her academic and artistic journey to the Muxerista community. She then presents the transcript of her speech to the CSULA: Nuestra Grad, Class of 2025, to showcase some of the Muxerista values that guide her work.

Keywords: muxerista pedagogy, artist, ethnic studies, graduation, Central American

Introduction

On May 17, 2025, I participated as an invited speaker at the California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA) graduation, “Nuestra Grad”, a cultural graduation honoring Chicanx/Latinx, Central American, South American, Caribbean, Indigenous, and Afro-Latinx graduates, parents, families, faculty, and administration. The speech I delivered at graduation highlighted key milestones in my art and academic journey, and expressed my hope of inspiring young scholars as they continued to sow seeds for the future. This opportunity to weave and connect my pedagogical praxis into this special issue on Muxerista pedagogy allowed me to provide more context and further develop my contribution to Muxerista spaces and communities.

I begin by naming my own academic and artistic journey, how I have arrived in the Muxerista community. I then present the transcript of my speech to the CSULA: Nuestra Grad, Class of 2025, to showcase some of the Muxerista values that guide my work.

Muxerista-Historia

As I continue to understand my social art practice in the classroom and in my everyday life as an artist, I have become accustomed to being an activist, *activista*, academic worker, archivist, *feminist*, and internationalist. More recently, I have felt inspired by the scholarship and personal leadership of Dr. Anita Revilla, Chair of the Department of Chicanx Latinx Studies at Cal State LA, with whom I have developed a bond and nurtured a kinship with Muxerista and Jotería Studies. Furthermore, my Central American *feminist* practice as an artist and professor for over forty years aligns with contemporary muxerista pedagogy. Knowledge, theory, and practice are always in flux, so this kinship and relational process is dynamic. I am reminded of Angela Davis's reflection on the increasing use of the term “intersectional” to describe her work over the previous three decades. She has openly shared that, in addition to working within the contexts of “solidarity,” “Black feminism,” “internationalism,” and “womanism,” she became comfortable using the term “intersectional” as many of us now do. But while these terms feel familiar, they are distinct within art and academic spaces that visualize a more complex Muxerista space. For example, when I embody the word *feminista*, I do not visualize a U.S.-based experience but rather the lived experience with my Salvadoran mother, who transgressed many gendered roles, and the women who fought as *guerrilleras*, some becoming activists exiled in Los Angeles after the Central American civil wars.

In 1994, I was in the M.F.A. program at the Mason Gross School of Art at Rutgers University–New Brunswick, at the time steeped in the discourse of cultural and racial identity politics and representation. My MFA Thesis, “CASA,” was inspired by the work of hooks et al. (1994) and by their identification of “cultural genealogy of resistance” (p. 22). I was attempting, via my art installation work, to reconstruct memories of home, of spaces and experiences, geographic, cultural, and psychological, that formed my mental construction of identity and understanding of the built environment. My MFA graduate exhibition, “*Kinder Garten: Trampas de la Fe*”, connected themes of my childhood with recent immigrant Salvadoran parents, displacement, poetics of space, memory, the complexities of assimilation, and language.

Thirty years later, as a professor at Cal State LA, I continue to transform the built environment through art installation. In my art installation work at the university I re-envisioned our spaces and enacted love and care for our students and faculty through the installations, exhibitions, and public events at Cal State LA including the “UMAS/MECHA-King Hall” installation for the 50th anniversary of the East LA Walkouts (Leda Ramos and Stefany Bravo, 2018) and the “*Central American Families: Networks and Cultural Resistance*” installation and exhibition for the 50th Anniversary Chicana Latinx Studies Department (Leda Ramos and Alejandra Lemus, University Library, 2018-2019). Outside the university, I completed the public art project, “*Dolores Huerta Square Street Naming and Community Fair in Boyle Heights*” (Leda Ramos, Emiliana Guereca, and Alice Bag with Council District 14, 2019). I also contributed to the redesign of the Cal State LA Department of Chicana Latinx Studies office to be a more welcoming space for our students, staff, faculty, and community members. I believe that all communities deserve beautiful spaces in which to live and do creative work. This social transformative work was always created pro bono, outside of art capitalism relations or conventional transactional interactions.

In Los Angeles, I collaborated with many queer and non-queer artists/activists in the mid-1980's as we often found ourselves at the same art openings, parties, and dance clubs. I actively supported VIVA Lesbian and Gay Latino Artists of Los Angeles, a small non-profit focused on promoting LGBTQ+ Latino artists (b. 1987), and many of my artist friends created exhibitions, performances, and art programs. Many of these personal relationships are still a part of my world today, and I bring that spirit of lived inclusion and long-term solidarity into my teaching, artist, and activist modes of being and doing.

My art and Central American camaraderie with Chicane artists at Self Help Graphics and Art included Chicane/Latine queer and non-queer artists beginning in 1984 (Cornejo 2023). During this time, I curated the exhibition, “*L.A. and Santa Barbara Artists Protesting the U.S. Intervention in El Salvador*”, at the Casa de la Raza Cultural Center in downtown Santa Barbara. It was a time of international solidarity movements, and our social justice advocacy propelled us to collaborate and work collectively with Central Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Chicane, Anglos, Black, Asian communities, and LGBTQ communities. The 1980s AIDS crisis also opened spaces of solidarity with the arts, activism, and the urgency of liberation. In Los Angeles in the 1980’s, Chicane Latine art circles pre-social media were much smaller, intersectional, and inclusive, perhaps by sheer spatial and economic necessity, as coalition building amplified across multiple spaces.

I regularly remind my students that there were many years of Chicane Latine cultural work to create larger and more funded arts and culture institutions that currently represent and affirm our communities. Black, Indigenous, Asian and Latine Museums today include: Plaza Cultura y Artes Museum (2011), Museum of Latin American Art (1996) Japanese American National Museum (1992), California Afro American Museum (1977), Chinese American Museum (2003), and the first major exhibition of Chicane art at UCLA Wight Gallery, “*CARA, Chicane Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*,” was in 1990. From the late 1970s and much of the 1980s we Chicane/Latine folks in Los Angeles relied heavily on the arts community spaces of Plaza de La Raza (b. 1970) and Self Help Graphics and Art (b. 1972) on the East side and the Social and Public Art Resource Center (b.1976) and Highways Performance Space (b.1989) on the Westside of LA. All four spaces continue to support our Latine artists and communities today. Throughout the 1990s, there were also alternative community spaces, including Luna Sol Café, which operated near MacArthur Park from 1996 to 2003, and the Troy Café, which operated from 1990 to 1995.

As a committee member of the 2024 National Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship (AJAAS) Conference at Cal State LA, it felt affirming to contribute and draw on those 25 years of experience and intergenerational knowledge. For AJAAS, I organized the film screening and panel for the documentary “*UNIDAD: Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos*” and the panel “*Central American Queer Artists at Self Help Graphics and Art*” to amplify queer and Central American camaraderie in art spaces in Los Angeles.

Creating a safe and creative learning environment that holds a wide range of cultural contexts and intergenerational experiences, race, gender, sexuality, and class, with care and humility, is fundamental to my work and aligns with Muxerista pedagogy. I have lived and experienced the white supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist, machista, assimilationist structures within my Central American family and in broader U.S. contexts all my life, never losing sight of my actions with others and how we can maintain and improve them for future generations. As a tomboy girl in a Catholic environment, my rebellion started early in life, and, as in most immigrant homes, I have also come to appreciate the creative resilience, imagination, vision, and “rasquache” aesthetics.

Today, I continue to resist against white supremacy, patriarchal, racial capitalist, and imperialist structures and strive to reclaim the social transformative and radical hope of a creative life in my teaching. My academic work aims to mentor love, compassion, respect, honesty, and solidarity while developing student voices and critical thinking. I desire to mentor others to draw from our collective imagination, always honoring the spirit of our ancestors. Central to this healing work are connections to contemporary artists and access to artworks, archives, documents, and film. Nearest to my heart is my current art/archive project, “*Central American Memoria Histórica Archive*” (CAMHA) at the University Library. CAMHA is a collaborative work of healing, community-based research, cultural knowledge, and historical and contemporary community histories of mostly Central American women artists/poets/and cultural workers for cultural affirmation and cultural resistance.

My artmaking, teaching, and activism have consistently gelled in my university and community work. I continue to collaborate with others to challenge racism, reduce harm, and create beauty and social justice for students, staff, and faculty. These creative strategies and commitment to each other are then modeled and embodied in the classroom with students as we dialogue, march, speak out, and organize to challenge what arises to oppress our community on and off campus. I firmly believe that my students bring a wealth of complex knowledge and valuable experience to the classroom. I learn daily from students, faculty union comrades, and colleagues across many departments, and as an Academic Senator within the College of Ethnic Studies' shared governance space. I am inspired by the emerging “Jotería and Muxerista Studies” in the Chicana Latinx Studies Department and the Women, Gender,

and Sexuality Studies Department at Cal State LA, expanding our shared vision, and am honored to contribute to this work centered on love, hope, and creativity.

In the following, I share the transcript of my keynote speech at the Cal State LA Nuestra Grad celebration for the Class of 2025. In my speech, I share my over forty years as an artist and educator in Los Angeles.

Leda Ramos, Keynote speaker (transcript)

Welcome, students, family, faculty, and staff, to Nuestra Grad Celebration 2025

May 17, 2025

Celebrating our Chicanx/Latinx, Central American, South American, Caribbean, Indigenous, and Afro-Latinx students and their families.

¡Bienvenidos, estudiantes, padres, familias y maestros de Cal State LA a Nuestra Grad 2025! Vamos a primero reconocer que estamos todos sobre la tierra originaria de los Tongva. Uso mi sombrero hoy para dar gracias a los braceros y a todos los campesinos y sus familias. I honor the labor of my father and all the campesinos and braceros who labor in the fields seven generations back and seven forward!

The theme for this year is “*Harvesting our Past, Planting our Future. Cosechando el Pasado, y Sembrando Para el Futuro*”. Yo soy la hija de un campesino y este tema me toca el corazón.

I want to acknowledge that you and your families are beautiful. I want to invoke the spirit of the past—the 1960s and 1970s “*Brown is Beautiful*” we saw chanted on the streets of LA. Within the context of that time, that was so radical. We learned from our siblings in the Black Panther Party that “*Black is Beautiful*” and that we also could declare our self-love and affirm our culture in our fight for civil rights in the Chicanx Movement and broader social movements in Latin America. Today, more than fifty years later, we amplify to say our Latinx communities are Black/Brown/Indigenous/Queer/Trans and all are beautiful across multiple borders and spatial geographies.

I want to connect past roots from the era of the 1960s and 1970s with the seeds you have sown as GRADUATES, not as nostalgia, but to honor our elders and to seek to adapt new liberatory strategies of survival. YOU are the continuum of the very seeds our ancestors have sown and harvested across borders, across languages, across our Pacha Mama. You are the present and future stewards, spirit protectors, thriving legacy of your families, chosen families, and their families, at a time of violent erasure and harm, so we have to double down on our

protection. You are a testament, as graduates, to the solidarity of family and others, that we will rethink and refuse the capitalist “American dream” narrative and prioritize our humanity, love, and care for others in our communities.

Root History

First, the remembering and reconnecting of my historical memory from the 1960s and 1970s. These are my **formative seed years**, and I share as a form of connection. I am Leda Ramos, madre, feminista, an artist, a Salvadoreña, a labor organizer, and a teacher of Chicanx Latinx Art and Film in the Department of Chicanx Latinx Studies, which resides within the second College of Ethnic Studies in the nation. I want to briefly share a little of my artistic and academic journey that has led me to Cal State LA. I was born in Echo Park, Los Angeles, in 1961. I am the daughter of Salvadoran immigrants who came to LA in the 1950’s, and my ancestors are Maya, Nawat Pipil, and Lenca. My father, Jose Efrain Ramos, was an “agricultur,” a campesino, a farmer of café and maiz, who, by chance, in 1955, when he migrated to LA, worked as a waiter. I also learned he was a former farmer when I discovered a “machete” under his bed and asked him why!

And my mother, Maria Argentina Flores, a seamstress, worked in the garment industry in LA, sewing piecework at home, and was an entrepreneur with a small clothing business out of our garage in the informal economy, aiding undocumented Salvadorans fleeing the pre-civil war years in the 1970s. Three of my siblings were born in El Salvador, and four siblings, including me, were born in LA. My older sister, Francis, was born at General Hospital, and thankfully, my mother was not sterilized like more than a few Mexican American women would experience in the 1960s and 1970s. The remaining three siblings, including me, were born at Kaiser Permanente Hospital in East Hollywood because by 1961, my father was a labor union member with UNITE/HERE and had medical insurance.

I repeat, I was born in 1961—too young to experience the “Walkouts,” and yet I could feel the rise of the emerging and powerful generation of “Chicanx” communities. I have vivid memories of 1970 and can remember young Chicanx organizers with long hair boycotting grapes in front of our neighborhood Safeway Market. I was aware that I was brown and that there was no representation that I could see on our television or in films. There was no Spanish-language TV at that time. I was not Chicana or Mexican American, yet that space is critical to the historical, intersectional, and solidarity spaces of my life in Los Angeles and out in

the world. I am a Central American born in LA with an identity that makes me aware of complex transborder histories and political revolutions.

As a child, I didn't see myself on TV, but I knew almost every Motown song from the radio and was aware of music and the legacy of Soul and R&B, while loving the pop and rock songs of the Beatles, David Bowie, and the Rolling Stones. It was later that I learned about the appropriation of American Black culture and music and the profound connection to American, British, and Latin American Rock and Roll music. Here I want to say, "Go see the film *Sinners*," a film that explores the appropriation of Black culture, historical trauma, and the power of music and community in the face of oppression—and it also has vampire-like zombies. Even more deeply, I heard the music from my father's vinyl record collection—Javier Solis, Trio Los Panchos, Pedro Infante, Augustin Lara, y La Orquesta de Don Bosco de El Salvador. These records from Mexico and Central America were gold to me. Lifting my spirit to a place of connection to my parents and a homeland I had never visited until 1992, and the end of the Salvadoran civil war.

Yet while I was growing in, around, and with the omnipresent Mexican American and Chicanx communities, this space also included an everyday feeling of "almost" belonging that finally had expression in 1980, my first year of college at UC Santa Barbara. My PUBLIC political consciousness was raised through transborder activism when I joined CISPES—The Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, BUT my ROOT political consciousness was shaped by witnessing my parents, whose compassion and selflessness included housing and feeding many Salvadorans in the 1970s and 1980s in our home. It is the ROOT consciousness that is the reason I am an activist and artist today. It was the decades of public activism within the international solidarity and sanctuary movement and later the Zapatista Movement that led me as an educator, artist, and activist today, now organizing within the international solidarity movement for a Free Palestine. It was an honor to witness the pro-Palestine activism on our campus, the longest Gaza Solidarity encampment in the nation. Here, I want to acknowledge the students from five CSUs currently on a hunger strike. *La Lucha Sigue*.

For the last six years, I have been the founder/director of an art/archive project I have been working on at Cal State LA, the Central American Memoria Histórica Archive, housed in the University Library. It is my gathering of culturally affirming "seeds" that are healing my spirit and self, to leave for my children, and for you and your children, and anyone wanting to learn

more about Central American cultural workers in LA. I am so humbled to be able to be with you all in the classroom. Many of you have been archiving your digital photos, ruminating on your past and wondering about your future, delving into the root systems that form your histories. Honor your roots. Excavate your roots. Document your roots, draw maps. Come to terms with your roots and love yourself in all your imperfections and beauty.

SHEROES/ALUMNI of Cal State LA

It is customary in a speech for Latinx grads to quote our great legacy of scholars, activists, and artists—Gloria Anzaldua, Dolores Huerta, Berta Caceres, Aime Cesaire, Franz Fanon, Paulo Freire, Eduardo Galeano, and those whose work intersects with us—Malcolm X, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Yuri Kochiyama, Grace Lee Boggs, and more. You all have spent many years gathering and cultivating your sense of self and humanity via your knowledge building of significant scholars who embraced our cultural affirmation and cultural resistance. Today, I want to share just a few Cal State LA distinguished alumni who, like you, graduated from Cal State LA. All women. All sheroes who defied the odds, gender expectations as leaders and artists, and whose resilience to thrive and flourish in our city, I hope, inspires you.

Gloria Arellanes

Gloria Arellanes, a political activist, former member of the Brown Berets, and co-founder of "Las Adelitas de Aztlan," a Chicana feminist group active during the Chicana Civil Rights Movement. Arellanes, whose mother was Tongva, was told not to share that among the Chicana community growing up. Later, Arellanes not only defied Latinx conformity but would become a fierce Tongva elder in Los Angeles. You can find her archive in our University Library. Her famous letter calling out the sexism in the Brown Berets is legendary.

Ofelia Esparza

Ofelia Esparza is a Chicana altar maker whose work is informed by a deep spiritual belief in the traditional process of honoring our ancestors. Her altars start at Self Help Graphics and Art in East LA, and for nearly 40 years, Esparza has shared her knowledge and art about el Día de Los Muertos with people in schools, museums, community centers, prisons, and parks throughout the Los Angeles region and beyond.

Alice Bag

Chicana punk music legend Alice Armendariz was a philosophy major at Cal State LA. Her punk identity "Alice Bag" is well documented in the film, "Chinatown Punk Wars," and she

has written two books, *Violence Girl* about growing up in East LA and surviving racism and domestic violence as a child and *Pipe Bomb for the Soul*, where she writes about her year teaching in Managua, Nicaragua after the Sandinista Revolution victory in 1979 as her final thesis project. I was fortunate to work with Alice Bag when we honored civil rights activist Dolores Huerta at our CLS 50th anniversary celebration.

Bamby Salcedo

Bamby Salcedo is a national and international transgender Latina woman who earned her Master's Degree in Chicanx Latinx Studies and has been featured in many documentaries for her activism as the President and CEO of the TransLatina Coalition, a national organization that addresses the issues facing transgender Latinx communities in the US. I just saw La Bamby at the May Day march just a few weeks ago, and she is not going to let Trump dishearten our threatened Trans community! She is fierce!

Conclusion

Graduates. The “seeds” that we harvest today connect to the past and into the future as *mana* (food and spiritual sustenance). Embrace all the roots that spread out beyond geography and seek out your spirit protectors. Be a spirit protector.

Graduates, refuse and challenge the political absurdity of our times and live your lives steadfast with hope that we will adapt and thrive together. This is especially important at a historical moment when we are feeling threats to our cultural memory and the contributions we make on a daily level in Los Angeles today.

How do we reap a healthy “cosecha” or harvest while planting seeds of infinite hope into the future, as Dr. King has taught us—while caring, healing, protecting, and empowering our community of immigrants, trans folks, and women and children? How do we protect the decades of culturally affirming scholarship and work in our communities? First, know that you have strong and powerful ancestral roots and that, as Cal State LA graduates, you now join the legacy of distinguished alumni who have followed their liberatory spirit.

Like you, I have incredible Cal State LA memories, both great and small. It was an honor to have co-chaired the historic 50th anniversary of Chicanx Latinx Studies, connecting the roots of the first Chicano Studies founded in 1968 to the present and linked with Pan African Studies founded in 1969; co-organized the first Latinx Queer national conference to celebrate our Latinx LGBTQIA+ familia, to have used our radical imagination, and dreamt with many of you at

our Gaza Solidarity Encampment last year and today to be able to address you all amazing and beautiful graduates and families.

Graduates, we celebrate and recognize your years of hard work and sacrifice. Padres/Familia, we celebrate and recognize your years of hard work and sacrifice. Together, we plant and gather seeds as individuals. Today we celebrate the persistence and the harvest—the cosecha—you all have created as individuals and more importantly as a community, a collective. In case you haven't noticed, most of our Nuestra Grads are women. Today, you are all goddesses of Mother Earth –goddess intellectuals, poets, writers, artists, scientists, and activists. Graduates, you are also fierce young men and LGBTQIA+ family, and we love you all. Together we will survive. Together we will thrive, and together we will reap our prosperity one day at a time.

Together we oppose genocide and all state-sanctioned violence and prisons from Palestine, Sudan, El Salvador, and here in LA.

¡Del Río al Mar, Palestina estará LIBRE! (Leda)

¡Que Viva Palestina Libre! Que Viva! (students/faculty)

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We are Sacred

Susana “Ix Chel” Cáceres

Independent Performance Scholar

We are Sacred

Susana “Ix Chel” Cáceres

Independent Performance Scholar

Abstract

This is a performance-based writing piece performed on June 14th, 2025, in Berkeley, CA, as part of the *This Is My Body* program by the Novalia Collective in the Bay Area. *This Is My Body* is an experience designed for women of color to reclaim their narratives, take up space, and own their truths. In this written piece, Susana “Ix Chel” Cáceres, a queer embryonic immigrant, made in El Salvador and born and raised in Pico Union and South Central, Los Angeles, California, unceded Tongva territory, shared her narrative within a Muxerista pedagogy. The video of the work presented in this piece can be found at: <http://bit.ly/4agcRsD> (at 15:23 mins). It is important to note that Susana came into her Muxerista consciousness while at UCLA when she became part of Raza Womyn in 2001. In that safe space, she was able to come out to herself and begin to take the steps of empowerment to leave her toxic, straight, monogamous relationship and start standing in her power as the bruja, boss bitch she is today.

Keywords: performance, Central American, healing, muxerista consciousness, Indigenous ceremony

Introduction

This play sits within Muxerista pedagogy because I use storytelling and ceremony to share my personal lived experience and to weave the intersectionality of my identities and show how I have been able to not only survive, but thrive in the face of all the different types of oppression that I experience as a queer, woman of color who is the eldest daughter of immigrants.

I developed my class, racial, and political consciousness at Community Coalition (CoCo) in South Central, Los Angeles, when I joined their youth program, which later became SCYEA, South Central Empowered thru Action. I came into my gender, queer, Muxerista consciousness at UCLA when I joined Raza Womyn de UCLA. I came into my spiritual and indigenous consciousness when I was invited to sit in Indigenous ceremony, when I found my curandera teacher, and when I started singing on a Two-Spirit drum. These are all the experiences that are my source of power and Self, and that allow me to practice self-acceptance/ forgiveness, self-love, and purpose. It is the intersectionality of these experiences that supports me in the everyday struggle to overcome racism, classism, xenophobia, sexism, and homophobia.

I am able to see my Divinity because I know my ancestors. Even if I don't know my tribal name or language, my ancestors know me, and I know them. It is the indigenous wisdom and medicine that I speak of in this play that counters white supremacy and its ingrained storytelling and rituals.

This play can be used as a tool for trans, queer, immigrant, black, brown, and Muxerista students to see themselves reflected in the protagonist and identify with her as she stands in her power and claims all of her identities. It could be a conversation starter about how naming and claiming your Muxerista, feminist, indigenous, queer/trans identity can lead to self-empowerment and reverberate to healing and social justice.

It could be used as a tool to discuss unspoken forms of knowledge that arise through song, dance, storytelling, ceremony, altar-making, ancestral honoring, prayer, plant medicine, and other spiritual practices. How do these types of lived and passed down understandings speak to teachings in academia? Are there ways that we embody and carry knowledge that should be acknowledged and can add to academic teachings and theories?

It is my blessing and privilege to offer this writing and performance play/ceremony as a tool to remember who we are, honor our ancestors, and reclaim our power and sacredness.

We Are Sacred

I begin by singing a short verse of Tonantzin, an Aztec Mother Earth song, using my Hand Drum.

If I had one wish for humanity, for everyone that I love, it would be that they could remember the way sometimes I can remember.

Sometimes, when I am grounded and I'm in the flow, I can remember that I am Divine, and I can act from that place. I can access my Divine Self to help my Human Self. My Divine Self can show compassion, forgiveness, kindness, and love to my Human Self. I am reminded that mistakes are lessons and that I-am-not-my-trauma. I know, like all of us, I came here with a purpose, and I am meant to share it. I have my own unique magic, my own ancestral medicine, my own special sauce, you could say.

When I connect to my Divinity, I belong. I can tend to my feelings. I am a selenium Cancer after all. I can hone in on my needs and desires. I can honor and speak my truth. We are Divine Beings having a Human experience, and we are also Human Beings having a Divine Experience; both are true. We are on Purpose. We are exactly where we are meant to be. And we are Love. [In a whisper] And we like ourselves.

Mi Magia, Mi Medicina es Amor.

My Magic, The Medicine that I carry is Love.

My Special Sauce is Love, and I'm here to share with all of you.

First and foremost, I am in Love with My Self. I am a queer, hella gay, solo polyamourist, kinky, unicorn of Love. Pronouns: She/Her and Femme.

My journey began when my Soul decided to be conceived in San Salvador, El Salvador. I came to this country in my mother's womb when she was 5 months pregnant. While she was running, she had an asthma attack. We could have died, but we survived. And on July 17, 1974, I became the first person in my lineage to be born on this land, specifically on unceded Tongva land, Los Angeles.

Figure 1

Me at about 3 months with my Mami Lidia, 1974.



Figure 2

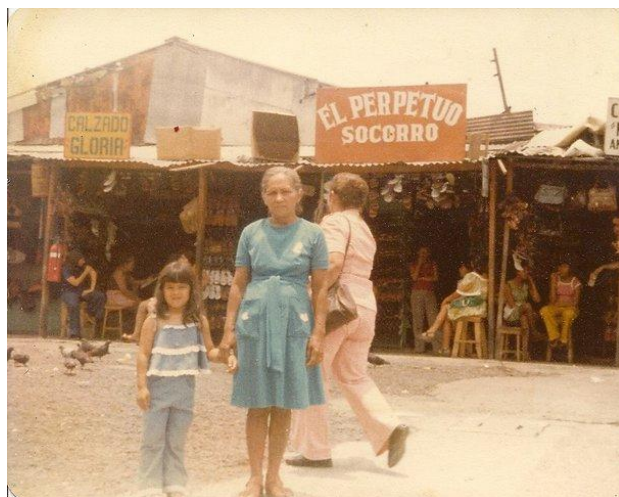
Celebrating my 2nd birthday in Pico Union, Los Angeles, 1976.



I had a really beautiful childhood. Not that it was perfect, but I had everything I needed, except my father. I had abundance, family, a beautiful home, structure, and most importantly, I had love, especially from my Mami and my Abuelita Carmen. That fundamental Love is ingrained in me that I am Love and that I deserve Love.

Figure 3

My first time in El Salvador at age 4 with my Abuelita Carmen, 1978.



Those first 9 years were amazing, and then, a lot of things changed in our lives. Like my Mama before me and my Abuelita before her, I was adultified, becoming a 3rd parent to my annoying little siblings, “deciding” at 13 to get my first job. That and socialization led me on a path of codependence, putting my feelings and needs last. And that led to being trapped in a 17-year relationship. From the age of 17 to 34, I was in a relationship where I took care of my ex to the complete detriment of My Self. I paid for our lives. I was scared. I endured sexual and emotional abuse. I was in the closet, and I told no one my whole truth. I was so far away from the person that I am today.

But even in the hardest of moments in my life, there was always this little fire inside of me, inside my gut, inside my heart, in my spirit, that knew that I deserved better. That knew that I deserved Love, that felt good to me. That knowledge, that fire, propelled me to get help for myself through therapy and finally, finally leave that relationship.

I came out of the closet, and I said, “You know what, I never want to be monogamous again! I’m good!” That experience, where my soul was dying, and I was so lost to myself, it allowed me to remember. Throughout the struggle of trying to figure out why I was so unhappy for so long, I still had that knowledge inside myself. That knowledge that we all have, that we all carry. Our connection to the Divine is in there; it’s in our bodies; it’s in our souls.

If I take the time to sing, to be grateful, to say a prayer, have a good cry, speak an affirmation for myself, do ceremony. If I set up an altar for myself with water, earth, fire, and air. If I sit in nature. If I experience pleasure. If I play or dance. If I treat myself like I wish my

father had treated me, like I wish my ex had treated me. If I honor myself, I can remember. I can remember to be kinder and more self-forgiving, and know that I am doing the best I can at all times. No one can love me or take care of me the way that I can. And I know that I can heal my trauma and reparent my inner selves.

I know all of this, and I still forget, like all the time. As soon as we come earthside, we slowly start to forget. We come into this world and experience trauma, and trauma leads to that disconnect from Source. What we are seeing now, what we've seen through history: genocide, transphobia, and xenophobia; it is disconnection. The inability to see the Humanity and the Divinity in each other.

But thankfully, the opposite is also true. Like right now, I CAN SEE the Divinity in all of you. I am remembering for all of us, right now. So we are going to smudge it out. This smudge is medicine, we are medicine, we are good, and we are sacred.

So I ask you, can you blow on your embers? Blow on that fire inside of you, make that smoke come, cleanse yourself with that smoke, bless yourself with that smoke.

Remember, Remember, YOU ARE SACRED.

Ashe. Ajo. Padiush.





Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue 2

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue, Part 2

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

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Liberatory Work with Reparative Potential:

Wealth Reclamation as Muxerista Praxis for Economic Justice

Veronica Garcia, MA

Wealth Reclamation Academy of Practitioners

**Liberatory Work with Reparative Potential:
Wealth Reclamation as Muxerista Praxis for Economic Justice**

Veronica Garcia, M.A.

Wealth Reclamation Academy of Practitioners

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.

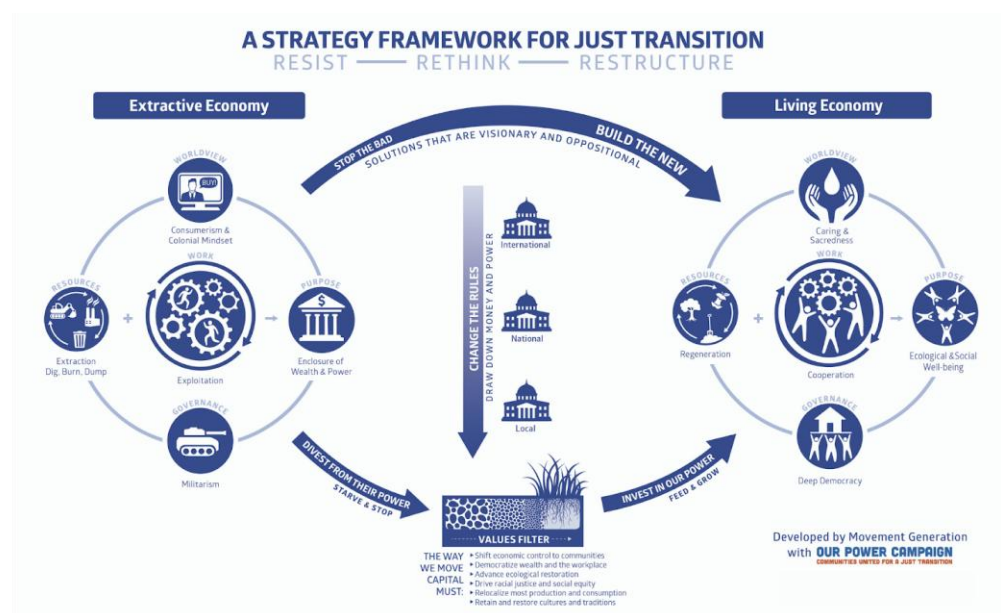
Wealth Extraction and Just Transition

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 & Zandoni, 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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Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

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Volume 20 Issue 2

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Muxerista Possibilities desde el Desierto:

A Research Note from a Vegas Muxerista

Briceida Hernandez-Toledo

University of California, Los Angeles

**Muxerista Possibilities desde el Desierto:
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Abstract

This essay reflects on my engagement with muxerista pedagogies and offers a personal account of its power and impact on my life and research. I focus on my positionality and educational journey, as well as the key interventions of femtorship, storytelling, friendship, love, and healing. I foreground my experiences growing up in Latine communities in Las Vegas, and discuss how muxerista pedagogies, and by extension, muxerista research methods and epistemologies, shape and frame my research.

Keywords: Muxerista pedagogies, Las Vegas, Latine communities, racial geography, researcher reflexivity

This essay reflects my engagement with muxerista pedagogies and offers a personal account of its power and impact on my life. I focus on my positionality and educational journeys, as well as the key interventions of femtorship, storytelling, friendship, love, and healing. In particular, I foreground my experiences growing up in Latine communities in Las Vegas, and discuss how muxerista pedagogies, and by extension, muxerista methods and epistemologies, shape and frame my current research project.¹ I first encountered muxeristas, muxerista pedagogies, and ethnic studies as an undergraduate at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) in 2014. It has been over 11 years since this first encounter and 9 years since I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Gender and Sexuality Studies. Much has transpired that would not have been possible without muxerista pedagogies and communities. In the following text, I share my muxerista origins and how muxerista pedagogies inform my scholarly identity and research trajectory.

A muxerista theoretical framework establishes the validity of theorizing and resisting colonization as a distinctly feminist and activist process. Dr. Anita Revilla (2010) defines a muxerista as a “Chican[x]/Latin[x] feminist and activist, committed to social change and an activist commitment to eliminating all forms of oppression and social injustice.” Principally, a muxerista framework “is committed to challenging all types of oppression in Chican[x]/Latin[x] communities, including but not limited to racism, imperialism, patriarchy, heterosexism, homophobia, nativism, and monolingualism” (Revilla 2004). These are the definitions I draw from in this work. Thus, muxerista is a term connected to legacies of queer Latine feminist activism, resistance, and community creation and nurturance (Revilla, 2004). It depends on close reflection on self, especially in connection with our personal and communal (often ethnic/racial/gendered) experiences, which have been shaped by societal structures. This is often connected to an element of consciousness-raising, both in its exposure and in its furtherance in our personal lives, relationships, and/or careers. Muxerista pedagogies transformed my understanding of justice by providing an actionable and ever-evolving framework that expanded my world and grounded my personal commitment to liberation in the lived realities of the day to day.

¹ I use Latine as a gender expansive and inclusive identity rather than Latinas and Latinos, which are gendered along the binary.

A Vegas Muxerista at UNLV

As I neared the end of my first semester of college, I happened to come across a flyer on campus for a course in the gender and sexuality studies department, Dr. Anita Revilla's Chicana Feminisms upper-level seminar. I distinctly remember feeling nervous and excited when I saw the flyer. Ethnic studies had not been taught at any of the public schools I attended growing up in Las Vegas. And while I had come across books and magazines about feminism, and one book on Chicano history at the public library, I had yet to fully engage or feel connected to either feminism or Chicano ideologies. But an opportunity to learn more about Chicanos AND feminism seemed groundbreaking to me at the time. So I emailed Anita to ask whether it was possible to take the course, as I had not met the prerequisites. Anita messaged back, letting me know I was welcome to join, and provided the information and next steps to enroll in the course. The course Chicana Feminisms proved to be life-saving, affirming, and world-expansive; it also facilitated an introduction to local Latine radical and queer students and activists. At the end of the semester, I emailed the final assignment and wrote: "Thank you so much for such an amazing class. I'm considering minoring or maybe even majoring in Women's Studies. I plan to continue reading and expanding my understanding of Xicana queer feminism." My interests went from one course to a lifetime commitment to muxerista values.

The simple act of bypassing the course prerequisites signified that, even before I entered her classroom, Anita recognized my life experiences as critical knowledge. While I had yet to take introductory courses in gender studies or ethnic studies, she fostered a learning environment that was accessible, engaging, and critical for students with diverse backgrounds and varying levels of engagement with the subject matter. She taught Chicana feminisms and ethnic studies through a firm grounding in her lived experiences, demonstrating the value in storytelling, self-reflexivity, and beginning at the root. She shared how her childhood and lived experiences shaped her multilayered social identities, providing real examples and eschewing academia's preferred "professional," impersonal, traditional mode of operation in favor of radical authenticity. This learning embedded within me a deep belief in the importance of starting with myself, not in a selfish way, but in a very real way that understands that the way each of us engages with the world, our communities, friends, and partners is tied to our identities and our understandings of the world around us. In the many classes I took with Anita during my undergraduate career, she consistently included a positionality assignment in her

courses, where she asked students to reflect on their race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, disability, and other social identities in an essay to map how these aspects have shaped our engagement with oppression and privilege, and to explore how intersectionality may have impacted our lives. This self-reflexive practice had multiple components: the modeling and examples Anita provided within her lectures, the conversations and reflections generated in the seminar, and the positionality essay, which allowed students to connect the course topics and materials directly to our lives at an individual level. This practice has stayed with me a decade later, informing and shaping my personal life, education, professional career, and research commitments.

In her teaching, inside and outside the academy, Anita embodied and modeled a muxerista way of being. Part of what distinguishes Muxerista Thought from Chicana feminism more broadly is a muxerista sensibility that openly centers queerness, love, and community liberation through questioning and challenging established norms, binaries, and practices of violence. In practice, Dr. Revilla challenged hierarchical ways of relating and grew to be more than a professor or femtor; she was also a friend, a loved one, and a part of my community and chosen family. She invited her students to conferences, exposing us to different places and communities of people involved in and interested in Latine queer politics. Together, we road-tripped from Las Vegas to the Association of Joteria, Arts, Activism, and Scholarship (AJAAS) conference in Phoenix, Arizona. She also invited us to the Chicana/o Educational Pipeline Summit at UCLA, where she carpooled with us and helped us secure a small motel near Koreatown in Los Angeles for the weekend. During that trip, she brought us (undergraduate students and Las Vegas muxeristas) to various cultural institutions in Los Angeles and even invited us to a speaking engagement organized by her colleague and friend, Dr. Nadine Bermudez. We were able to meet many of her colleagues, mentors, and students at UCLA and East Los Angeles Community College. For many of us, this was our first time leaving Las Vegas and experiencing these parts of Los Angeles. She opened possibilities and provided access to spaces where we could engage and think beyond ourselves, all while building community, creating connections, and critically engaging with our identities and histories. Muxerista learning and growing together are defining components of living a muxerista life and enacting a muxerista vision. While an orientation towards justice and anti-oppression work is felt and lived prior to coming into a muxerista way of being, a learned and modeled commitment to each

other becomes an integral part of the consciousness-raising process. This process necessitates both individual and communal accountability and care. For me, encountering Anita and the first generation of muxeristas, aka “The Activist Crew,” in my early undergraduate career, then forming part of the following generation, demonstrated the possibility of bridging academia, social justice, and found family in my life and career (Orozco, 2022; Orozco, 2025). This was also the first time I even thought to consider the existence of queer Latines. Muxerista pedagogy transcends the classroom and fosters queer possibilities that live on through our dreams, visions, careers, and relationships. Engaging with muxeristas relationally and adapting this strand of intersectional, Chicana feminist practice reaffirmed my intrinsic belief in the value of my communities’ self-worth and knowledge while also providing a mirror so that I could view and recognize this inherent value and worthiness within myself.

In this essay, I write from a space of personal transformation, intimately connected to my dissertation work, and based on my experiences growing up and finding community in Las Vegas, Nevada. I have been on the receiving end of femtorship and spirit restoration (Revilla, 2021) under Anita’s guidance since my undergraduate years. Spirit restoration is also what my muxerista familia connections bring to my life. We practice healing justice through the relationships we build with each other, centered on love, understanding, and acceptance. The muxeristas in my world are life-sustaining, real and true lifelines.

A Vegas Muxerista at UCLA

After the trip to Los Angeles, I became curious about attending school there. Visiting campus and hearing Anita’s stories about graduate school and her experiences around the campus solidified the possibility of more beyond Las Vegas. Ten years later, I am a doctoral candidate at UCLA in one of the three programs in the nation that offer a doctorate in Chicana/o/x studies. Muxerista teachings and worldviews have been integral to my life and the work I do. Like many other academics in ethnic, feminist, and gender studies, my work is deeply personal, reflecting my lived experiences and values. I embed a muxerista methodology into my dissertation work because, to me, it seems almost natural and a part of who I am. Muxerista methodologies involve deep reflexive intentionality throughout the research process. In some ways, that has contributed to my project taking longer than expected, as the drive to be intentional, real, and mindful can turn into perfectionism and fear of unintentionally harming others, which then leads to procrastination and avoidance. In the next passage, I identify and

share my understanding of and engagement with muxerista methodologies in relation to my dissertation research.

Muxerista methodologies inform the questions I ask, whom I ask them to, and the care I have for participants, my work, and its value. Esposito and Evans-Winters's (2022) intersectional research approaches resonate with my own incorporation of muxerista theories and methods as frames for my research. In their book, they speak to the importance of self-reflexivity and intentionality in the research process, emphasizing the importance of understanding ourselves deeply as researchers because our experiences, perceptions, and cultural identities undoubtedly impact our work and its outcomes. Similarly, muxerista research approaches require self-reflexivity and beginning with the self. This is why my own experiences and engagements with Las Vegas form the foundations of my research project. When I think of Las Vegas, I think of my parents and their hard work and sacrifice, and how their lives are impacted by the conditions created by the combined forces of capitalism, labor, and migration. As I think of my work and research, especially through the added lens of a muxerista vision, I generate endless research paths and more questions to ask participants. There is so much in Las Vegas that is worth recognizing and knowing, so much potential for intervention and invitation. One question that comes to mind now is, how do Latines navigate agency within the constraints placed on them as they live in Las Vegas? Do they have agency in building their families? How do they feel or process their emotions? Do they choose to save money towards the possibility of a future away from this? Las Vegas is portrayed as a liminal space, home for now, not home forever; work for now, not work forever. What does retirement look like for folks like my parents? Aside from their endless commitment to work and family, they have difficulty imagining the possibility of rest, engaging in hobbies, or developing new behaviors and patterns. As my mother continues working hard as a production worker at an industrial laundry facility, where she has been for over 25 years, providing linen services essential to the hospitality industry in Las Vegas, she wonders how much longer her body can withstand the extreme conditions and demands. Yet, she continually states that all she wants is for her children to be happy, healthy, and financially stable. And she cannot fathom the possibility of asking for more for herself. From my experiences living in Las Vegas and now through my research project, I see how these communities have agency in the face of difficult conditions, altering circumstances, and creating

new possibilities through imagining and yearning for more, if not for themselves, then for their children and families.

Place, Tracing the Roots, and Latine Geographies

Self-reflexivity and beginning at the root means tracing and contextualizing my lived experiences. I am the daughter of Mexican immigrants, born and raised in Las Vegas, Nevada. I grew up in a working-class family with my two parents, two older brothers, and one older sister. Home to me evokes feelings of the dry, hot desert, images of older homes with multiple cars in the driveways, desert xeriscaping, bougainvillea, rose bushes, sparse trees, and the hustle and bustle of traffic along Las Vegas Boulevard. Home, parents, immigration. Many are lured to the infamous tourist destination by the promise of abundant work, the elusive potential for realizing the American Dream, and the yearning to provide better opportunities for their kids, for stability, for peace, for happiness. It means being surrounded by working-class people of color in areas of Las Vegas that evoke personal feelings of safety, home, grief, and comfort in areas others might consider “dangerous,” “ghetto,” and forgotten. It means witnessing dignity and sparks of life and lives even in the midst of hunger, struggle, sadness, and survival. It means understanding how my parents have struggled and continue to struggle to sustain a sense of stability, while also balancing a longing and anxiety about where and what home has meant for them. That’s aside from experiencing the impact of trauma, oppression, poverty, and physically labor-intensive jobs on their health, relationships, and well-being. A lived and practiced *mexerista* sensibility and methodology is inextricably tied to place. It is the affective, the lingering emotions and feelings tied to place as knowledge and information, that I prioritize in my research, data collection, and methodologies. That is why my own work seeks to honor and understand the Latine communities and population across the Las Vegas Valley and their lives in relation to place (Hernandez-Toledo, 2016 & 2020). Racial geography scholars have demonstrated that space, regardless of size or scale, matters and holds information, agency, and power, and that space has been shaped across time, both in the real, physical, built environment and cognitively through collective and individual memories and imaginations. The space of Las Vegas is unique for a few reasons. It has been constructed with gaming, tourism, and leisure in mind. This means the needs of those who live and labor in Las Vegas to sustain this resource-intensive place are often ignored, in deference to the Valley’s tourism-centered economic growth and profit. This is reflected in the collective imaginary cultivated across popular culture,

both domestically and abroad, of Las Vegas as an internationally-renowned tourist destination, where fun, frivolity, spending, and vice are expected and encouraged. This imaginary often subsumes the realities of the lives of working people and their families who might call Las Vegas home. As is common in service work and tourist destinations, the labor of service and construction workers is often relegated to the background, discredited, and often underpaid and exploited. When workers rise, as they historically do and as they will continue to do so, their perceived value to dominant society is often limited to the role they play in producing the resources required to make Las Vegas possible; their own lives, knowledge, and ways of knowing are often ignored or unacknowledged.

My dissertation has grown out of my experiences and those of my family, friends, and community. A muxerista theoretical lens and methodology frame my ongoing engagement with research and have informed my focus on the broader Las Vegas Latine population. Particularly relevant, muxerista values emphasize a community-grounded approach. This means we value and honor the knowledge everyone holds. When examining and working with Latine communities and individuals, especially in a tourist economy dependent on a large service industry, it is critical to question hierarchical systems that shape the perceived value of education and deservingness, as reflected in job titles and class status. Muxerista teorías and values stem from Chicana and feminist activism, teaching, and scholarship. A muxerista praxis is rooted in my work and research goals. Similar to stories shared by many other first-generation students, my parents often perceive themselves as “undereducated” or “sin educación” because their childhood realities in rural Mexico limited the education accessible to them and their families. At their rancho, Las Cruces de Barreras in Michoacán, public education options were limited and, for decades, included only primary school teaching. Here, it’s important to note that even within the limited range of schooling offered to their community, education was often an unreachable dream because of capitalist, colonial systems and structural inequalities. These systems made their large families reliant on their children's labor. My parents were forced to leave their families and homes because their traditional ways of living seemed incompatible and at odds with the growing demands of a changing world. For my dad, this meant a routine passage between Mexico and the United States as a young man. Like many others, my father traveled in pursuit of temporary employment so he could save and return to Mexico. For my mom, this meant leaving for the city for a brief time at a young age to pursue a trade.

Unfortunately, instead, she would encounter anti-Indigenous and anti-peasant classist sentiments imposed on her by her own family. To this day, my mother recalls how her sister-in-law held her hopes of pursuing trade schooling against her, forcing her into unpaid work and forcing her to cut her long hair short because of the discriminatory association long hair had with a rural, peasant, working-class, indigenous connection. With this dream shattered, my mother returned to her rancho, where the only option for leaving her parents' home seemed to be to marry and start a family of her own. I share these stories not only because they matter, but because their origins shaped my family's journeys to Las Vegas, Nevada and connect to similar stories that have brought many others to Las Vegas on similar journeys.

Conclusion

Las Vegas is my home. It is also a site where the forces of the war and defense industry, capitalism, U.S. westward expansion, globalism, and modernity collide in interesting, often inequitable ways. It is more than a tourist city. It is a place where people work, survive, and where Latine communities find ways to experience joy, celebration, and care in the face of persistent erasure and disavowal. It is where I learned to expand my world, exploring possibilities through muxerista practices of communal and relational care. While my parents, like many other immigrants, instilled within me a respect for education, this respect developed into a harmful relationship between education, self-worth, external validation, and capitalist values of economic upward mobility, at whatever cost. Muxerista femtorship and community building intervened to reframe my view of education. Muxerista pedagogies provided visions of love, justice, and liberation, acting as a pathway to personal healing. Latine communities in Las Vegas are deserving of attention and care within ethnic studies and beyond. The stories, labor, and knowledge of Latines in Las Vegas are invaluable. This research note is meant to provide snippets of muxerista pedagogical practices in action through the years, from my first encounter as an undergraduate student to the current role it plays in my personal life and research. It is part of an ongoing journey, as I will continue to explore questions of home, labor, family, survival, and agency in Latine Las Vegas.

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Poetry Collection

Flor Olivo

Writer, Artist, and Community Organizer

Flor Olivo

Writer, Artist, and Community Organizer

Forgive Yourself Today (in love)

a poem for the days you feel like quitting

you feel the lack.
and your body is screaming for more,
not more work,
not more survival,
not more roles to play
or hats to wear.

more love.

the nourishing kind.
the kind that sees you
and doesn't ask
for a receipt.

you don't owe your trauma
to anyone
who won't even
hold your hand
through it.

you need tenderness.
you need gentleness.
you need to stop
proving your worth
to rooms that feed
on your hunger.

begin again,
a daily practice.
small, sacred acts
of re-parenting.
nothing grand.

just a soft
touch point
with your own
wild
aching
heart.

when you say,
“even my body feels broken,”

I believe you.

that kind of exhaustion
doesn't come
from laziness.
it comes
from war.

but your body
is not broken.
she is wise.
she is begging
you to listen.

that tightness in your chest?
that ache in your bones?
that numbness,
the fire, the fog
that clings to everything?

that is your body
whispering...
please. choose us now.

you don't have to heal overnight.
you just have to stop
hurting more.

let's make a ritual.
a grounding.
a tiny promise:
today, I will give my body one thing
she didn't have yesterday.

water.
a nap.
silence.
a slow stretch.
a full meal.
permission
to rest.

you are not too late
to save yourself.

you are not unworthy
 because you're tired.
 you are not too broken
 to begin again.
 you are not weak
 for wanting out.

you deserve
 a room of your own.
 a rest that doesn't cost you everything.
 a love that starts
 with your own
 breath.
 yes
 that breath.
 You are the beginning.

I Can Do This Job, and Twelve Others (in love)

A Poem Made of Work I Had to Explain

Dear Hiring Committee,

I am writing to express my interest
 in surviving.

In keeping the lights on.
 In making the most of a résumé
 that zig-zags like trauma
 but somehow looks linear in Word.

My background includes
 graphic design, trauma-informed facilitation,
 bartending, inventory control at a nursery,
 and crying during grant deadlines.

I've folded baptismal laundry in the Salt Lake Temple,
 taught gender theory in a polyester blazer,
 designed logos at 2 AM with a baby on my chest.

Yes, I've worked across sectors—
 nonprofit, higher ed, unpaid emotional labor,
 and the occasional committee
 that "values diverse voices."
 (As long as those voices take notes.)

I've written cover letters
that said, "I'm passionate about your mission."
when what I meant was
I desperately need dental.

I've taught college students
how to deconstruct media
and how to ask for an extension without lying.

I've managed social media accounts
and generational trauma.
I've facilitated equity dialogues
and PTA snack sign-ups.
All while maintaining
a deep commitment to not screaming in meetings.

You said you're looking for someone
who can multitask.
I offer:
nursing my son,
translating my parents' divorce documents,
and answering emails at red lights.

I do not promise perfection.
But I do bring
presence.
Perspective.
And a Google Drive full of miracle saves.

I am not your ideal candidate.
I am every job I've taken
because I had rent due.
I am every line I cut from this letter to sound "professional."

What I bring is:
grace under pressure,
clarity under chaos,
and a sense of humor
I do not owe you
but offer anyway.

In Community,
Flor Olivo, MA

Susana Cáceres

Founder, Donor Advisor, Coach & Consultant, Flow Giving LLC

flowgiving@gmail.com

Susana Cáceres (she/her), MA, is a queer embryonic immigrant, made in El Salvador and born and raised in Los Angeles, California, unceded Tongva territory. She is reindigenizing her lineage by claiming all of her ancestral tribes and by studying indigenous medicine and wisdom. She speaks her truth through poetry, film, and her Two-Spirit Drum. She has an M.A. in Latin American Studies from UCLA and a B.A. in Human Development from CSULB. After decades of working in local, national, and international nonprofits, she founded Flow Giving, which provides philanthropic/donor advising, donor/executive/transformational coaching, and resource mobilizing consulting.

Rebecca Catzalco-Soria

Claremont Graduate University

rebecca.catzalco-soria@cgu.edu

Rebecca Catzalco-Soria (she/her/ella) is a Ph.D. student in Cultural Studies at Claremont Graduate University and an instructor across California's community colleges, where she teaches Ethnic and Latinx Studies. Her scholarship and teaching explore the educational journeys of Mexican American women from rural communities through frameworks of testimonios, Chicana and Muxerista feminist thought. As a first-generation scholar from the Central Valley in California, her work centers on intergenerational storytelling and pedagogies of the home as sites of healing that transform knowledge, resistance, and spaces of care.

Katherine E. Coronado

California State University, Los Angeles

kbatane2@calstatela.edu

Katherine E. Coronado is a Chicana lesbian muxerista scholar-activist and lecturer in the Department of Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. As a first-generation academic, she examines spaces of belonging within Latinx and queer communities through her pedagogy and research. Born and raised in the San Gabriel Valley, she holds a BA from the University of California, Los Angeles and an MA from California State University, Los Angeles. As a granddaughter of a Bracero, she centers *testimonios* of resistance and documents the stories that often go untold.

Zamara Cuyún

Artist

zcuyunart@gmail.com

Zamara Cuyún is, for better or worse, a product of colonization, with Indigenous roots in Guatemala, born and raised in Minneapolis. A self-taught, “Gringindia” artist of de-Indigenized Highland Maya ancestry, she works in acrylics, using elements of Guatemalan Maya history, ideology, and iconography – sometimes to explore and create a vibrant, colorful, imaginary dream universe and, at other times, to represent the restless, violent, and unsettling world we are often forced to inhabit. The themes that inspire her work include Indigenous identity, the history of colonization and resistance, the persecution and genocide of Indigenous populations, the call for social justice, reconciliation, revitalization, and decolonization, and the central role and strength of women in this process.

Olga A. Estrada

University of Texas at San Antonio

olga.estrada@utsa.edu

Olga A. Estrada (they/them), Ph.D., earned a doctorate in Culture, Literacy, and Language from the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). They hold an M.A. in Latin American and Border Studies from UTEP and a B.A. in Ethnic Studies from Colorado State University. As an artist, scholar, and educator, they teach courses in joteria studies. Their research uses autohistoria-teoría and rasquache pedagogies to explore Joteria life, Chicana/x sisterhood, and elemental storytelling. They are also a co-founder of the Wetty Collective, a community initiative dedicated to building queer conocimiento through zines, workshops, and art pop-Ups.

Zeltzin-Nayeli Estrada-Rodríguez

California State University, Los Angeles

zestrad7@calstatela.edu

Zeltzin Estrada-Rodríguez (she/her) earned her MA in Chicana/x/o and Latina/x/o Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. Her work is rooted in muxerista and jotería pedagogies that imagine the classroom as a space of learning and knowledge, as well as healing, love, and transformation. Through creative writing, she explores how students can reclaim their voices, reimagine themselves, and build meaningful connections with others and their communities. Her goal is to become an educator who cultivates classroom spaces grounded in care, love, and collective growth.

Desiré G. Gálvez

Second Grade Teacher, Hal Smith Elementary School

desire.galvez@gmail.com

Desiré Gabriela Galvez (she/they) is a Chicana educator, muxerista, and second-grade teacher in Las Vegas, Nevada. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Gender, Sexuality, and Ethnic Studies and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her work is informed by culturally sustaining, humanizing, and justice-centered approaches to education and explores how identity, community, and care shape teaching and learning. She is dedicated to cultivating classrooms where students feel valued, empowered, and connected to their own cultural strengths. Their goal is to nurture curiosity and empower everyone to bring their full selves into the learning process.

Josie Garcia

University of Arizona

josiegl@arizona.edu

Josie Garcia (she/her) is a doctoral candidate at the University of Arizona's Center for the Study of Higher Education. Her research focuses on college access and retention of historically underrepresented students in South Texas. Her dissertation examines students' perceptions in a Mexican American Studies dual-credit course and how this curriculum has influenced their navigation of higher education. As a Chicana femtor, Garcia's work uplifts Ethnic Studies as a pathway to academic confidence, cultural pride, and college-going resiliency.

Veronica Garcia

Wealth Reclamation Academy of Practitioners

veronica@reclaimcommunitywealth.org

Veronica Garcia (she/her/ella) was born in Los Angeles and raised on the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso, Texas. She has over 20 years of experience working with social justice nonprofit organizations and community groups on issues including health care disparities, LGBTQ equity, anti-racism, reproductive justice, food security, economic justice, and migrant rights. Veronica is the founder of the Wealth Reclamation Academy of Practitioners (WRAP), in partnership with a national network of social justice grassroots fundraisers, to recontextualize how social justice organizers think about and practice movement resourcing in the U.S. Veronica holds a B.A. in Sociology and a Master of Nonprofit Management, and is earning an MA in Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies.

Briceida Hernandez-Toledo

University of California, Los Angeles

briherntol@ucla.edu

Briceida is a muxerista and queer Chicana feminist dedicated to education as a pathway to liberation. Rooted in her Las Vegas upbringing, her work integrates muxerista pedagogies with community advocacy. Her research examines how Latine communities navigate the power-laden geography of Las Vegas, highlighting sociopolitical erasure and material conditions within a hyper-exploitative city. As an educator, she engages in accessible, justice-grounded learning. Committed to making academia beneficial beyond the classroom, Briceida's work contributes to national discourses on emergent Latine communities and remains rooted in community empowerment.

Osa T. Hidalgo de la Riva

Public Scholar

dreaglebear@gmail.com

Osa T. Hidalgo de la Riva (she/her), PhD, is a filmmaker, public scholar, and activist. She received three Master of Arts degrees and, in 2004, her Ph.D. from USC's School of Cinematic Arts, Critical Studies Division. She taught at UC Berkeley from 2008 to 2013. Her film *Mujeria: The Olmeca Rap* premiered at the Kabuki Theater in San Francisco; *Mujeria: Primitive and Proud* debuted at the Roxie Cinema, SF. In 2007, her animation artwork *Las Olmecas* was included in Elizabeth Martinez's *500 Years of Chicana Women's History*. Osa received the Chancellor's Public Scholar Award and was granted the California Arts Council Individual Artist Fellow Legacy Award. She is currently working with the Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective to digitally preserve the archival legacy of the mujeres de la Riva (<https://chicanapormiraza.org/content/las-mujeres-de-la-riva>).

Flor Olivo

flawur@gmail.com

Flor Olivo (she/her), M.A., is a writer, artist, and community organizer in Salt Lake City, Utah. Born in Houston, Texas, to Mexican and Colombian parents, her work explores embodiment, migration, memory, and healing through a mestiza lens. Drawing from lived experience and community practice, she examines identity, ritual, labor, and communal care and belonging.

Bianca Quintanilla Melton

University of Texas at Austin

bquintanilla@utexas.edu

Bianca Quintanilla Melton (she/her), PhD, is a Chicana scholar from the Texas-Mexico borderlands. She holds a Ph.D in Comparative Literature from the University of Texas at Austin. Her dissertation is titled, *Chicana Allegory: The Politics of Identity and Myth in Literature and Film* (2025).

Leda Ramos

California State University, Los Angeles

Iramos46@calstatela.edu

Leda Ramos (she/her), M.F.A, is a Salvadoran American artist and teaches Chicana & Central American Art and Film in the Chicana(o) and Latina(o) Studies Department at Cal State LA. Ramos is the founder/director of the Central American Memoria Histórica Archive, University Library, a ten-year community art/research project (2018-2028) to affirm the cultural production of Central Americans in Los Angeles as cultural resistance and healing @camhacsula. Ramos earned her M.F.A. degree from Rutgers University and her B.A. in Sociology from UC Santa Barbara, and received a College Art Association Fellowship for the “L.A. as Subject: Directory of Less Visible Archives & Collections” project, Getty Research Institute.

Anita Tijerina Revilla

California State University, Los Angeles

arevill2@calstatela.edu

Anita Tijerina Revilla (she/her), Ph.D., is a Muxerista, Jotería activist-scholar, and Professor in the Department of Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. She earned her degrees from Princeton University, Teachers College at Columbia University, and UCLA. Her research centers student movements, social justice education, and queer and feminist activism. Grounded in Jotería Studies, Muxerista Consciousness, and Women of Color feminisms, her work theorizes Muxerista pedagogy, spirit restoration, and radical love as transformative practices that heal us inside and outside of higher education. She is one of the co-founders of the Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship (AJAAS), Cal State LA’s College of Ethnic Studies, and UNLV’s Department of Interdisciplinary, Gender, and Ethnic Studies.

Diana Solis

University of California, Riverside

dianasolis777@gmail.com

Diana Solis (she/her) is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Riverside. She is from La Puente in the San Gabriel Valley (SGV) and is a first-generation college student. She earned her B.A. in Gender, Ethnicity, and Multicultural Studies from Cal Poly Pomona and her M.A. in Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies from Cal State LA. Her research focuses on Muxerista Circles as healing-centered pedagogical practices grounded in Muxerista Consciousness, Disability Justice, and feminist of color theory. She examines collective healing, relationality, and resistance to academic spirit harm. She is an educator committed to humanizing, accessible, and community-centered pedagogy.

Nadia Zepeda

California State University, Fullerton

nzepeda@fullerton.edu

Nadia Zepeda (she/her), PhD, is an interdisciplinary scholar-activist from Santa Ana, CA. She's an Assistant Professor in the Department of Chicana/o Studies at California State University, Fullerton. Nadia received her BA in Chicano/Latino Studies & Spanish from California State University, Long Beach, and her PhD in Chicana/o & Central American Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. Through collaborative and community-based research, she traces the genealogy of healing justice in Chicana/x feminist organizing. Her teaching, research, and commitment to healing justice exemplify her investments in visions of transformative justice in the university and beyond.