

**CRITICAL FOLKDANCE PEDAGOGY:  
WOMEN'S FOLKDANCING AS FEMINIST PRACTICE**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores women's contribution to maintaining folkdance as an embodied feminist practice. Women folkdance educators project a social consciousness from personal and public experiences, a knowledge that stems across a variety of spaces and performances that serve to politicize ethnic cultural identities. The survival of Carnival, theatrical events and school competitions depend on grass roots resistances to preserve ethnic solidarity, assert economic compensation and negotiate meanings between personal, regional, and national symbols. The underlying messages reveal a complex historical past, a nostalgic past where traces of race, class, and gender oppression are overturned as symbols of liberation through dance and through women's voices. Social action thrives through a collective solidarity pulled together by a union of African, Native, and European cultures. The plural contexts of embodied counter memories reveal a mutual need to express social equality and human integrity projected as a sacred inheritance of knowing lands, navigating oceans, and celebrating community. This research focuses women's ability to cross timespace boundaries using past and present recreate and contest modern tendencies of selling folkdance spectacles as a global commodity.

The various uses of folklore as a patriarchal concept reify nationhood that differentiates "first" and "third" world knowledge. The lack of feminist perspectives in this area of study leads to the absence of critical "third world" feminist interpretations as a foundational lens that validates folkdance as corporeal liberation. Folkdance as oppositional to male dominated histories focuses on an appreciation of the body linked to an epistemology of Earthbound consciousness as a substantive approach to a critical

fokdance pedagogy as a conceptual framework. A critical folkdance pedagogy is a dialectic between revolutionary tendencies of Carnival theory, and a reinterpretation of dance as staged history, culminating as praxis in the classroom.

A folkfeminist methodology meshes qualitative/interpretive analysis, 'near native' reflexive ethnography and participatory dimensions throughout the research process. Barranquilla, Colombia South America, an Atlantic coast is the primary location for the study. Cross referencing a variety of textual literary sources provides evidence that validates women's voices as feminist practices.



*In loving memory of my mother, Maria Trinidad Dávila Estrada*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*Now and then when we are worn out by our lives in big buildings, we will turn to you as we do our children-to the innocent, the ingenuous, the spontaneous. We will turn to you as to the childhood of the world. (Fanon, 1984, p. 132)*

This project unfolds as a form to legitimize dance as an embodied dialogue to consider folkdance as counter history where a combination of indigenous histories and women's contributions retain folkdance knowledge as an on-going practice. The geographic spaces, especially in many third world countries, are a site of resistance where capitalist driven spaces are appropriating carnival, a central space for the performance of folkdance, as cultural capital.

This project begins with exploring the concept of folklore and various aspects of how this category of knowledge as an informal alternative educational experience is woven into the social fabric of national representations. As an academic field of study, the collection of information from subordinate groups is coming from the perspective of patriarchy in search of establishing traditions that are separate from other ethnic groups. Folklore nationhood upholds nation-state hegemony, on one end, which cements part of a national/colonial romanticism through myths, epics, and travelor's tales as a justifiable heroes journey with the purpose of establishing sovereignty among the common populace. Maintaining folklore traditions becomes a foundation for a cultural wealth and identity of a people where an attitude of nostalgia, authenticity, and origin create a sense of reality for dominant cultures. As such, the politics of folklore and more specifically folkdances become a terrain for class distinctions, gender relations, and ethnic representations creating tension between the state and the people. Moreover,

deconstructing patriarchal folklore nationhood is a contemporary critical practice that is concerned with understanding the uses of folklore as a critical nostalgia/ romanticism that reifies group identities and solidarity. In addition, the establishment of the “new world” through the colonial literary genre of folklore “history” is contested through critical folkdance as a restaging of indigenous resistance. Where dehumanizing ethnic traditions through folklore as a form of patriarchal nationhood creates the nature vs. culture divide, an alternative base using key words within the Latin American modernist literary canon such as *romanticismo*, *naturalismo*, and *indiginismo* are reconceptualized through critical folkdance pedagogy as an opposition to the destructive forces of first world consumption. Critical folkdance pedagogy revisits, land, ocean, and earth symbolism as a continuance of a utopian practice synchronized with third world feminist representations that embrace a collective consciousness through folkdance.

To draw attention to the meaning of folklore for those who practice traditions as a way of life, critical third world feminisms challenges the current establishment of folklore by countering with experiences that blur boundaries and spaces of what constitutes public and private use of folklore, personal and political, emotional and intellectual, where the embodiment of folkdance has already existed as liberatory platform for women of the third world working within and inspite of machismo, economic exploitation, exoticization of the body, and commercial capital of festive cultures. Within our subjective experiences as Comparative education feminists, Black feminists, Latina, and U.S. feminists, postcolonial feminists, we are also a collective among our multiple perspectives and expansive among a planetary vision of gender, class, and ethnic equality. With these visions in mind, in places like Latin America, the

Middle East, Africa, and Asia, folkdance as women's practices can better support the meaning of folklore. Furthermore, turning to the body as a center for historical agency and embodied memory addresses the immobile male gaze and mobilizes, moves, and identifies women as valuing an aesthetic energy of the physical that aligns us with dance as a feminist resistance. Synchronizing dance as historic yet present, grounded in land yet acknowledging life death life cycles encompasses an assertion of self and identity through a consciousness of movement.

In chapter 4, *Critical Folkdance Pedagogy*, I combine several theoretical platforms that introduce folkdance as a way to create a space for social change. I borrow from performance theories and performative aspects through an interpretation of symbolic interaction, which includes revisiting carnival and festive cultures. In order to redirect the potential revolutionary tendencies of carnival representations as grassroots action, I aim to locate specific spaces where culture is taught and learned and learn from teachers whose knowledge of dance impacts the community. Looking into the educational realm is a practical approach to understanding the function of a society through its educational systems. Moreover, using theoretical underpinnings of critical educational theories that supports research initiatives redirects traditional research with a clear purpose of transforming through pedagogies of social justice and social change by reevaluating the education, formal or informal as a terrain for dialectic teaching and learning. For example, in light of addressing the possibility of critical third world views, critical folkdance pedagogy is a concept of looking at folkdance and the dialectic within several discourses of a society, much like a staged performance as a reflection of society, literary texts as a politics of counter memory, personal experiences as human



agency, and the causes and effects of how oppression and liberation are negotiated by the working classes through dance. The theoretical platforms of critical pedagogy come together with subversive principles of carnival practices in order to reconfigure a critical folkdance pedagogy that can respond to addressing the problems of social inequality. Restaging the past is a figurative dance between embodied resistances through folkdance as people's response to postcolonialism, womanhood, ethnic identities that are action driven by the working classes. Restaging the past also hones in on validating presence and contributions that have been thwarted in capitalist driven societies which can be countered through an interpretation of critical folkdance pedagogy, much like a counter memory of postcolonialism. This chapter attempts to set the stage for revisiting the revolutionary tendencies of the festive cultures using folkdance as a textual discourse in such a way that the mobile and thinking body can locate a presence through folklore to create a peaceful opposition to socio-economic oppression.

To narrow the focus of cultural identity for third world women using an interpretation of folkdance practices, I cross reference several stages, such as the private and public spaces and the places where they learn, teach, and rehearse. More specifically, the classroom stage as a reflection of public influence, the values of carnival as a reflection for use in the classroom both have successes and constraints. With this in mind, educational theories that focus on social change within the classroom can be combined with the ideas of festive performance, staging folkdance, and the need to legitimize a consciousness of movement in order to reclaim what has been removed by public institutions. The task at hand is to learn about the histories that have been

retained in the classroom, in public and private lives of those women who practice folkdance. In essence, I seek to provide examples of how educators implement folkdance and what kinds of messages are being taught through embodied interaction and symbolism, the successes as well as the pitfalls.

The dynamic contemporary uses of folkdance as a topic of research explores the various layers of cultural interaction within symbolic historical contexts that can dismantle the hierarchical positioning for women. These dimensions include a clear intent to expose contradictions among personal experience, public performance, historical significance, and researcher reflexivity as part of the voices that unfold under a methodological lens of creates possibilities. For example, revisiting carnival as a context in understanding many facets of freedom of expression through current performances, a critical analysis of poems, symbols and participatory dimensions include interviews and observations in public and private spaces. Cross referencing the various meanings of an action based pedagogy that moves across various discourses including autoethnographic references are employed here within the traditions of qualitative and interpretive methods and analysis. For example, the study of folkdance combines a subjective positioning of “near native” marginality through several journals and observations as a means to reflect upon the complicit nature of representing others and myself as part of a conscious process of change which include moving past the limitations and awareness of my own social conditioning. The utopian expectations and the crude realities, the time span restrictions among coincidental non-fictional journeys are aspects into the participatory dimensions, textual analysis and bicultural marginality of a politics of writing. The challenges of stepping out into international spaces, public

institutions, and private homes in order to meet the women was not easy even though I had access to these areas from family members. How women choose to be heard and the careful words that are communicated, the time to transcribe, translate and interpret their voices is another layer that is implicit in this research process. The cultural differences in setting up times to interview and the time spent in between is also a politics of waiting and negotiating legitimacy as a novice researcher. Furthermore, the official study takes place in Barranquilla, Colombia, the Caribbean coast lasting 1 year, from summer 2003 to summer 2004. The same year I was accepted into the EPS program, I received a David Boren National Security fellowship to study abroad. I recently went back for 2 weeks in May 2008. I observed and participated in Carnival spectacles, private folkdance schools, and public folkdance classes at Instituto Técnico Nacional de Comercio, staged folkdance performances in order to locate the critical folkdance pedagogical processes that are transmitted from the festive society, staged past and classroom learning. In order to document these different spaces and locations, I took video and photography, archival research, and video/photography and incorporated them as part of the resources.

Chapter 6 focuses on providing critical textual analysis of folkdancing as part of a counter history through memory and literary prose is embedded within both historical and contemporary Carnival practices. The array of emotions and the utility of expressive festive cultures come from living through folkdance performances that build upon a nostalgic past, with indigenous identities that are represented through symbolic meanings and codes that also run the risk of being overshadowed by carnival enterprises. The visuals of folkdance as a staged history provide a background of

grassroots traditions grounded in African, native and European mixtures. Carnival as an act of freedom from oppressive structures is felt through the disillusionment of happiness and merriment. The perspective of an outsider coming in to experience, research and observe carnival is an inherited tradition is also a relevant voice within the deconstruction of introspective experience that resound with the informal pedagogies of my upbringing. The critical folkdance pedagogies considers corporeal movement of folkdance within a given time space as well as the symbols that signal satire and mimicry of dominant cultures as in La Marimonda or the symbols of the complex Zenú in the sombrero Vueltaio. Brief background histories into the Paloteo, Garabato, Farota, and Cumbia suggest subversive expressions from subordinate race and class groups as historical markers. The male perspective adds to the dimension of folkfeminism because we are able to notice the gaps of womanist representation in the literature on one hand, but we can also deduce that by default, dance is an act of action based performance that is present yet not mainstream. The literature connotes that dancing is the catalyst of a sense of belonging to the land and revering nature from the perspective of the working class. In order to contrast these dominant allegories of dance, Bullerengue is a feminist art form that has deviated from race and class categories by flourishing both in dance and song. The intermingling of chanted dance contains messages of women's survival and collective communities that reflect women's social conditions. Martina's music represents the chanted dances of Alé Kuma and Tambora music which have flourished as another form of folkdance traditions. In addition, a mainstream folk artist Esther Forero has also contributed to understanding her passion for Carnival and what it has meant for the Barranquillan people as part of the Caribbean identity. In essence,

inheriting tradition as part of a broader knowledge system within the structure of this project is shared through personal memory and individual agency through the lives of women folklorists.

After observing and participating in folkdance classes and artistic performances in Carnival and school festivals, the time and effort dedicated toward folkdancing was clearly demonstrated as a year-round performance and a normative attitude as a way of folkdance pedagogy. Chapter 7 locates women's voices and experiences as acts of liberation for teachers, dancers, and leaders of carnival projects, private classrooms, personal challenges, and advocacy for folkdance tradition. Monica, Luz Marina and Carmen are dancers, instructors, directors, and choreographers in both private and public schools who are leaders and the *hacedores* or doers of traditional folkdance practices. Through their personal lives and professional lives, they have resisted, challenged, and continue to struggle with being in a male dominated society. All in all, this work is a collaborative process of making meaning of folkdances through glimpse of personal histories, memories, struggles, triumphs and trajectories of how women have continued expressing folkdance traditions.

## Introduction

The purpose of critical folkdance pedagogy is to address the need to revisit marginalized practices and to learn from those folklorists who continue to practice with a purpose to educate in classroom environments. As they move through these spaces, both publicly and privately, they claim historical, gender, and ethnic dances as an act of survival within the economic constraints of cultural capital. Critical Folkdance

Pedagogy as an oppositional practice can also function as a situational performance with the potential to transform. For example, a common practice for one community can also be a radical practice for others, especially in western societies that have policed the body and replaced it with the values of patriarchy, competition, abstraction, domination and oppression, over the wisdom found within marginalized cultures.

In a deliberate effort to regain the fundamental human value of movement, this study provides concrete examples of how women play an important role as educators, to permit, change, learn, and teach traditions that are cemented in a philosophy that bridges divisions. These pedagogies allow body movement to be grounded in self-formation as well as the expression of broader cultural constructions. The multiple and infinite amount of meanings, purposes, relations, implications and assumptions of dance is relational to specific cultural exchanges. More specifically, these interactions can liberate individuals and flourish in classroom environments, or in any space, where folkdance is taught and learned. This research surfaces out of the obvious contrasts between western culture and cultures that represent indigenous retentions from African and Native cultures, which survived through a principle of unity. The significance of dance has its place as a representational performance and an art form that reenacts a practice focused on community life, community building, solidarity, and the bridging of cultural divisions and differences.

### Why Folkdancing in Colombia?

The roots of this research began with childhood travel to Colombia for Carnival season with my mother and sister. Being partly native to this country of notorious

political drug wars with 13 military groups (Rabasa, 2001) is not part of a handed down memory. The regional vastness and diversity is divided among 32 provincial states: the Atlantic Ocean to the northeast, the Caribbean Sea to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the west, the Andes Mountains in the central region, and the Amazon jungles in the south. The land and oceans are natural boundaries that enable each region to maintain their own autonomous identities. Colombia's population is roughly 44.4 million.

Barranquilla, once a port city, known by locals as "La Arenosa" because of its sandy and arid climate, is cornered by the Caribbean Sea and the mouth of the Magdalena River where waters flow down from the Andes Mountains.

I traveled to Colombia at the age of 2, 8, 16, 21, and 30 years of age, always learning and getting closer to understanding the reasoning and motivation for folk dancing and costumes. Coming from a small midwest Nazarene town, dancing was banned from all social gatherings, and this contradiction sparked my interest at an early age. My mother's ability to teach and demonstrate dancing at home and at times within pockets of cultural awareness in the public school was one of her primary, yet contradicting lessons in the Nazarene youth group. Teaching folk dancing informally brought about an interesting method of establishing relationships, which overrode the stereotype of violence, drugs and war in Colombia. At 21, I began to question racial representations of blackness and segregation, the extreme economic hardships, the regional divisions, and the way that people kept their various folk dance histories intact despite the forty plus years of civil war. Amidst all of the problems of race, class, and gender, I hoped to find an underlying location of unity; a space where intergenerational, interracial and interclass relationships are passed along to make humanitarian

connections. I have witnessed several distinctions between the underlying practices of folklore and the spirit of individual liberation that remains connected but not limited to the Caribbean culture. My goal is to develop an alternative perspective of folkdance, the possibilities of an embodied social, and personal consciousness that can surface as a critical folkdance pedagogy as a practice of memory, movement, and liberation.



## CHAPTER 2

### FOLKLORE NATIONHOOD

Folklore has existed since the beginning of time where information among people has been passed along as informal educational traditions from one generation to the next. “Folk” signifies a people, an ethnic group, a race and “lore,” an accumulated fact, tradition or belief about a particular subject; knowledge acquired through education or experience; anything taught or learned (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 1981). American folklore (Brunvand, 1998) is a trajectory from a European academic field of study tied to Romantic Nationalism (Bendix, 1997; Fox, 1993). Its function as a repetitive social performance; however, enables it to function as a silent fabric whose foundations are at times, problematically cemented within a society, region and nation.

Folklore is an ideology that permeates all class systems, all nations, and all people through genres, literatures, festivals, and performances to the extent that defining its meaning within popular culture is broad in scope due to its common value and comfort zone. As a field of academic study, its name is changing and some folklorists debate both transformative and objectifying contributions within the context of capitalism (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1996; Orling, 1998). As a pedagogical system embedded within historical traditions (Bronner, 2000), folklore currents manifest through the repetition of cultural patterns. Its archaic uses, therefore, make it a magnet of informal truths that build the foundations for establishing a national patriarchal hegemony. What, then, does the informal pedagogy of folklore teach us? What are its underlying meanings? This study seeks to examine how folklore has been defined historically and how it is used in international contexts as part of a larger nation

building effort. More specifically, it interrogates the concept of folklore and its relationship to reifying patriarchal constructs.

### Historical Trajectory

Overarching currents in literary folklore link the concept of myth, legend and hero as part of a larger historical fabric defined as a timeless intellectual history of nostalgia (Propp, 1984). Historians of religion also recreate the idealization of myths and legends that according to Euphemerus in 316 b.c., originated from actual historical characters, events and gods deified and worshipped after their death (Boak, 1915). The “folktale historian,” an oxymoronic concept, may not have discursive validity within dominant historical currents. Nevertheless, the reification of male superiority is cemented in traditions. For example, in literature, key words such as “timeless,” “intellect,” and “nostalgia” are congruent with concepts of myths, heroes and legends that justify a folklore type as a long-lived and un-changing pattern. Many of our western writers and philosophers identify folklore as a subsystem of non-“intellect,” where generalized and stereotypical ideologies spring out of inferior, unproven knowledge from societies who do not normally participate in the construction of knowledge as part of the established society.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The definitions of folklore according to the development of western civilization signify a collective, primitive, emotional, bad, demonic, public, communist, fixed way of knowing. “It as a handing over of knowledge without reference to book, print or school teacher. The born opponent of the serial number, the stamped product, and the patented standard . . . the tendency of folklore has a tendency to restrict rather than to let it expand all the way--Marius Barbeau.” “Folklore may never be written even in a literate society, and it may exist in societies which have no form of writing but rather as art form related to music, dance, graphic and plastic arts.--William Bascom.” “Customs and beliefs where the educated and sophisticated share with the uneducated and naïve--B.A Botkin.” “It also true that certain cultures or groups have a more prevailing folklore than others . . . it is present in the environment, accepted, used, transformed, transmitted, or forgotten, without impetus from individual minds--M. Harmon.” “The study

Johann Gottfried von Herder, a German folklorist in the 18th century, adopted the concept of *das Volk* which means folk or nation. Germany, once being defined into seven distinct classes, due to the divisions between Protestants and Catholics up until 1871, could not address the German nation as a whole. Folklore tradition, rooted in a patrimonial lineage, was meant to unite a diversified nation into a homogenous whole. Since tradition and education were synonymous pedagogies used to uphold the social order, tradition as education also kept women's contribution on the margins of cultural integration. The Herderian framework continues to be a foundational principle that has infiltrated into the scripts of folklore research (Fox, 1993).

These literary traditions imply that there is a questionable link between literature and folklore in its construction of knowledge as pedagogical foundation of a nation/colony. The category of what is and is not folklore depends on historical perspectives handed down from nations, states, groups and individuals.

The term "folklore" in the United States seems to have been officially used in 1846 by an Englishman W. G. Thoms to refer to the customs, superstitions and traditions of people (Lusas-Schloetter, 2004). The Black Folklore Movement at the Hampton Institute in Virginia was prompted by Alice Mabel Bacon in 1893 after

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of the unwritten literature . . . it became clear that the customs of living 'primitive' folk could not properly be equated with those of the actual historic predecessors of Western European nation-- Melville Herskovitz." "The data of folklore are immediate and potent evidence of the nature of man when man is defining his fears and aspirations and searching for a security which always eludes him--R.D Jameson." "Folklore is an accumulated knowledge of a homogenous unsophisticated people--MacEdward Leach." "Popular beliefs which have survived among the less educated elements of civilized societies today--John Mish." "Folklore is always the delight of children because it is the poetic wisdom of the children of the race . . . there is a strong feminine element in folklore because its origin antedates the emergence of reason and belongs in the instinctive and intuitional areas-as distinct from history, which is the factual record in writing--Charles Francis Potter." These definitions were originally categorized in 1949 (Funk & Wagnalls, 1972).

attending classes with Blacks and developing a fascination with their “spirituals”<sup>2</sup> (Bronner 2002). The Folklore Movement in Philadelphia, New York City, Baltimore, New Orleans, Chicago, and Montreal sought to collect traditions from formerly enslaved Africans and their offspring in the plantation South (Bacon, 2002). Alice Mabel Bacon stated that “collecting folklore from the rural plantations would show the ‘Cultural Progress’ of the race associated with economic improvement. The organizers believed it would provide a positive racial legacy for Blacks” (p. 87). Folklore in the United States seen through the lens of White male supremacy, has shaped racialization processes between African and Anglo cultures in the United States (Jordan & De Caro, 1996).

The establishment of folklore within U.S. academic institutions began in 1950 and is currently facing tensions as an academic field, stemming from its overall inability to contribute to a rising demand for profits among academic institutions (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1996). Although I will not go into detail about the folklore polemic in academic institutions, I will mention that it engages an interdisciplinary discussion with the potential for comparative educational analysis on global and local levels. Folklore is at the forefront as a primary source for historical answers in the field of archaeology. Archaeologists, for example, are finding that folklore continuances resonate with historical facts and help answer questions that once seemed irrelevant within anthropology (Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf, 1999).

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<sup>2</sup>Spirituals were known as African dances.

However, as a form of traditional anthropological study and nation building, folklore reinforces paternalistic knowledge systems that positions itself as a universal subject that oversees other cultural discourses where an absence of a subject is deemed as an anonymous actor. Immigrant populations, “races.” ethnic groups, indigenous cultures, colonized subjects and women’s practices, for example, are part of an informal folkloric practice, an invisible undercurrent contrasting the exposed surface of knowledge of nationhood, canonical texts and male superiority. Deconstructing binary structures like black/white or male/female are also concepts that permeate through folklore discourses.

#### Folklore and National/Colonial Romanticism

National romanticism and nostalgia during times of economic uncertainties uphold folkloric discourses. They mark the beginnings of new power structures and the general reorganization of nations and colonies. Historical texts containing myths, heroes and legends, reifies male dominated systems. Stuart Hall (1996) called this the “archive” of knowledge and literary discourses of power through religious and biblical sources, mythology, and traveler’s tales. Myth and folklore take off with greater force especially in times of social and historical change, at once replicating and validating social structures that legitimize the quest for western expansion (Stoelje, 1987).

The use of Catholicism, traveler’s tales, and historical change, for example, can be found within the invention of the New World. These discursive ingredients are embedded and continue to sustain legends and heroes. Although these texts may not fall into the traditional rubrics of folklore as seen from modern sources, they can also be

critically studied as patriarchal formations of colonial dominance. The literary fabric that is used in myths, legends, and heroic accounts are similar to those in modernist folklore studies. From a historical trajectory of Folklore, the invention comes much later as a romanticized definition to homogenize nationhood/colonies. The Spanish-American literary canon beginning with the narratives of Christopher Columbus (Colón, 1946) and Alvaro Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca (1992) are just a few examples Christopher Columbus as the hero of the New World portrays himself as saint and bearer of Christ as he baptizes the land. He uses intertextual discourses of fantasy and supernatural abilities in order to recreate himself into a hero or savior. Alvaro Nuñez, on the other hand, described himself in a testimonial literary discourse as a self proclaimed healer. According to his writings, his special powers gave him access into the world of indigenous culture. In both texts, native subjectivity is explicitly denied and replaced by a higher power of morality, expressed through hyper real and fictional representations.

These historical diaries and testaments share folkloric storytelling principles that involve mythmaking and fantastical imagery as an establishment of heroes and legends. From the Finnish Epic “Kavaleh” and the anonymous Epic Spanish poem of “El Mio Cid,” these “unofficial” writings mark literary beginnings for literary studies in each of these countries, a patriarchal genesis of culture, through the partially fictitious lives of noble cavalry. The retention and validity of what is and is not considered folklore and who determines its legitimacy and categories has been traditionally viewed from four folkloric functions<sup>3</sup> (Bascom 1965). In other words, folklore is a part of the discursive

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<sup>3</sup> Most classifications are textual. Malinowski categorizes them as Fairytales which are vague beliefs, legends are magical and believed to be true or contain factual information, and myths are venerable and

codes that allow nations to be built on partial truths and concoctions (Hobsbawm, 1983). Each group constructs their own historical tale, a force that entitles the dominant culture to share a perspective from an ideology of common historical traditions.

Myths heroes and legends in the expansion of the American western frontier focus less on religious connotations and more on the capacity of physical stamina to settle and build the nation. Americans identify, for example, with the American cowboy as the hero of the Western frontier who symbolizes the beginning of a new nation, civilization, exploration and conquest (Stoelje, 1987). Violence toward the indigenous enemy is asserted and accepted as part of the foundation in forging a national identity. Johnny Appleseed cultivates the earth, Paul Bunyon uses his overemphasized strength and masculinity to chop, build, and eat as a superhuman. These actual historical characters teeter between hero and legend, as an understood part of American popular culture that is not necessarily found in history books but established as part of storytelling and folklore tales. American folklore, in these instances, is a mixture of both factual and fictional literary discourses. The folklorization of culture or traditionalization seen through journeys, expeditions and travel diaries are part and parcel to the construction of myth and legend. The context of newness and expansion dismisses an absent "other" and performs the act of folklorizing, by oppressing and amassing fictitious stories that belong to dominant cultures.

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sacred. The functions, according to William Bascom are (a) a systematization of ethnographic collection, (b) validates culture and justifies rituals and institutions to those who perform or observe them, (c) the role it plays in education, particularly and non-exclusively in non-literate societies, (d) folklore fulfills the important but often overlooked function of maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of behavior.

An example of massification for the intention of nationhood can be witnessed within an extreme patriarchal system of National Socialism by using literary discourses of national romanticism (Bendix, 1997). Folklore in this context became a discourse of propaganda to unify Germany as an autonomous nation and mass culture in search of “folk” in cementing national unity. By piecing together national symbols and ideology, folklore was used as a foundation to instill a notion of a “pure race” in order to authenticate or legitimize a discourse of power intended to target the mass population. The appropriation and construction of folklore as a mechanism to link the nation-state into the psychology of the common populace and create a false illusion of a homogenous culture in search of racial superiority--a phenomenon which ultimately lead to extinction of the Jewish population. Although this is an extreme example of the use of folklore for nation building, it demonstrates its use as a strategy to establish a patriarchal hegemony with the intent to instill an ideology of racial pureness.

The construction of Germanic folklore, in other words, created a “superior” nation while the exclusion of Jewish peoples and their traditions were ostracized. This intellectual history of nostalgia (Cashman, 2006) predates folklore. Appealing to mass cultures created a false consciousness of unification and morale, while reinventing folklore for the purpose of modern positivism enhanced, rehabilitated and actually raised the morale of its people to align with the belief systems of the Nazi party. Linda Hutcheons (1988) stated that this nostalgia creates “personal irrational desire and a falsely imagined past. It is an untrustworthy form of romanticism that constructs edenic, utopian pasts” (p. 39).



In *History and Theory of Folklore*, Vladimir Propp (1984) discussed the idea of folklore as a literary tradition is the study of all strata, a *spiritual and scientific* culture that is not only a “western” European and North American concept Propp’s focus on the establishment of Russian popular culture also engages the national identity of communism and political goals. He maintained folklore’s legitimacy by juxtaposing it against materialism or capitalism. Moreover, Propp asserted that folklore must be studied separately from material culture: “folklore as it is defined in the west is not a separate area of knowledge rather a popular scientific study of one’s own native country” (p. 4). He advanced the idea that folklore scholarship can be of any nation, and promotes academic literary studies as a process of changeability by analyzing anonymous authors.

The underlying methodological principle of folklore as an anonymously authored phenomenon; however, does not engage the performance from the experience of the performer. Propp’s critique and opposition of “material” artifacts thus still draws from the Cold War ideology of a patriarchal scientific approach to understanding the world. Studying culture from this viewpoint is problematic and constructs a nation within a positivist conceptual framework that substantiates difference among international politics. Anonymity, as a prerequisite, establishes a sense of nationhood within countries where academic authors carry agency on behalf of anonymous performers and silenced groups.

U.S. American folklore, as well as other western trends, follows part of the European trajectory of nation/colony building, Romantic Nationalism, and anthropology as an invention of knowledge. Comparative studies within the folklore genre have

linked folklore to tradition, science, spiritual, and religious themes like the creation of the New World, American Western Expansion, and Modernist Positivism as a political tool for patriarchal hierarchies. Hence, the historical uses of folklore studies have not been used to decentralize oppressive power structures, but rather to reinforce them.

### Commercialization of Folklore

To protect folklore as intellectual property, legal international policies are in place to protect and fix the authenticity of culture through nation-state governance. However, countries like Colombia, Panama, Peru, and Dominican Republic continue to link folklore to the realm of public spaces and are excluded from national copyright protection (Lucas-Schloetter, 2004). In most international law contexts; however, the ministers of culture seek to project a national agenda that aims to preserve folklore, a form of cultural capital, from being exploited.

For example, in Barranquilla, Colombia, Carnival was proclaimed to be a national patrimony and also an intangible expression of the people. In this case, public spaces for expression and national identity feed off one another and mutually influence each other in order to negotiate folklore as part of mass culture. “These provisions appear a little contradictory in that it is difficult to see how notions of copyright in the sense of a monopoly granted to the holder can be reconciled with the public domain synonymous with unrestricted utilization” (Lucas-Schloetter, 2004, p. 285). The restricted and non-transformative approach to folklore from those in power gives rise to morals and respect among the masses, but also creates a space for critique.

Mazharul Islam's (1998) interpretation, on the other hand, emphasizes overarching economic demands at work in the production of folklore, as opposed to the capacity of groups or individuals to transform processes. Conforming to hierarchical and economic interests, he says, is linked to regional distinction. This means people acquire a mechanical knowledge through

imitation, observation and in some cases rigorous training based on learned traditions, customs and social heritage. These learned behaviors are molded by geographical conditions, linguistic position, social interest and livelihood to conform to these acts of lore. The individual is a product that can be constructed to produce wealth that accepts and is accepted by society also becomes its wealth through folklore. Although the test of time is required, the dependence on performance groups generates cultural capital. (p. 16)

Cultural capital depends on performance groups to keep regional and national identity intact. Furthermore, the industrialization of folklore (or folklorization) as a cultural commodity within a class-based system, stunts the potential transformational practices of folklore. Instead, this folklorization (i.e., to folklorize or modernize) is used as private enterprises use cultural capital and in turn reduce the subversive qualities of folklore in order to fill the need for mass consumption in capitalist economies. The problem with the commercialization of folklore as part of commodity, according to Mary Ann Mesnil (1987), is that the potential for expressing the political identity of selective groups are trivialized placed aside overlooked, and forgotten. She argued that we have lost the continuance of Bakhtinian social revolutions with folklorized festivals because of the overarching economic drive that pull it. People "make do" with normative qualities of folklore through repetition to sustain the demands within economic systems. The folkloric is sustained as a year-round mainstream process that lacks critical attention to the phenomenon of social performance because the society

may not question or envision folklore performance as a process of transformation, but rather an unquestioned traditional obligation.

Folklore is both a literary tool to maintain nationhood, as well as an organic pedagogy of poor workers as a break down of folklore, popular culture, and mass culture. Material interest anchored in tourism and entertainment for the upper classes tends to regulate and appropriate a form of folklore replaced by the technological reproduction of popular culture as capital goods. Although technology allows an unlimited reproduction of cultural goods, the focus is not whether the reproduction of folklore for mass consumption extinguishes it out of the realm of tradition. The question of folklore, according to Regina Bendix (1997), is that it is a form of cultural hegemony where industrial centers appropriate the marginalized countryside for a space of recreation. The conflict between folklore and industrial culture, thus, “denies a connection between culture and industry even though it owes its existence to this very connection” (Baussinger, as cited in Bendix, p. 93).

As such, David Guss (2000) called for an analysis of socially constructed meanings, which go beyond the scope of patriarchal limitations:

If “traditions” are to be commodified like valuable family jewels (national patrimony), then they must also be subject to some means of verification. In this sense, authenticity and tradition are coconspirators in ensuring that the socially constructed and contingent nature of festive practice will continue to be misrecognized...the same form may be used to articulate a number of different ideas and over time can easily oscillate between religious devotion, ethnic solidarity, political resistance, national identity and even commercial spectacle. (p. 14)

Peter Wade (2000) specifically used *Cumbia* as an example of how this particular folkdance represents heterogeneous identities that come together as an

integral part of the Atlantic coast culture; a culture that resists dominant Spanish culture, but must also fit into the accepted social norms of the society. He indicated that “the historiography of *Cumbia*, debating the relative weight of Amerindian, African and European heritage, sees its own reflection in the dance itself, as a dramatic replaying of an original--and in this case subversive--act of mixture” (p. 61). Wade (2000) asserted that ethnic groups are confined to the realm of the folkloric, reinscribed in an insignificant past, resuscitated only during events of public display. Those in power redesign and appropriate culture in order to hide the country’s vast socio-economic inequalities that reproduce class, race, and gender discrimination.

Even though Romantic nationalism and nostalgia have been part of an oppressive discourse for people, Ray Cashman (2006) looked at tradition through a lens of critical nostalgia when studying Folklore in Northern Ireland.

Without proper ethnographic research, the traces from the past that people retain are bound to seem overwhelming in number and triviality. Through prolonged and honest engagement with others, however, we’ve come to appreciate the value of the backward glance as an instrument of critical evaluation and efforts to (re)build community. (p. 155)

The fast pace of time in modern life is an act rebellion against the time of history, progress and modernism. “Remembering positive aspects of the past” Cashman argued, “does not necessarily indicate a desire to return there” (p. 148).

Although the term folklore is relatively new in theory but ancient in practice, its uses have been used to perpetuate heroes, myths and legends using history and religious symbols (e.g., Christopher Columbus) and material expansion (like Paul Bunyon, the American cowboy, and Davy Crockett) to legitimize male dominance. It has been used to amass national spirit such as Hitler’s Germany. It has been theorized to be the culture

of the lower class, a scientific study of native culture, a political dance of nations, cultural property of nations, and romanticized/ nostalgic forms of knowledge.

The archaic significance of folklore, commonly viewed as an undeserving topic of investigation, merits closer attention within the realm of critical folklore studies due to lack of attention in comparative fields of study and international studies.

Restructuring conceptions of folklore entails a critical reflection on how cultures and identities are represented historically. Frantz Fanon (1963) insinuated that poems songs and folklore are an insignificant space to begin the decolonization of minds and bodies of oppressed people, yet he is considered a leading figure in decolonization theories. He rejected a part of his African-Negro culture by undermining the substantive expressions of song, poems and folklore that are valid point of view, especially for third world cultures, as a political space for struggle and liberation. The Judeo Christian philosophies of reason and faith, represents a history of tradition where patriarchal dominance is implied in the consciousness of a society. Those who grapple with the gray areas of belonging, identity and difference, must question many forms of traditions and expose vulnerabilities and triumphs within those traditions.

Strip our bodies and our minds naked to understand our place within the world, it is tradition to which the anti-Semites turn in order to ground the validity of their "point of view." It is tradition, it is that long historical past, it is the blood relation between Pascal and Descartes that is invoked when the Jew is told, and there is no possibility of you finding a place in society. . . . it is around the peoples' struggles that African-Negro culture takes on substance, and not around songs, poems, or folklore. (p. 121)

Like Fanon (1984), who questioned the dominant societies' tradition of understanding "racial" purity in a timeperiod of rationalizing the theory of evolution, he clearly overlooked these cultural spaces of song and dance as seemingly childish or

shallow responses of people's struggles that are embodied and articulated differently than in a White male dominated society. Tradition, in this case, is restrictive, selective and value-laden with historical foundations. Traditionalization may be understood as the complex process of using old elements and references of the past to construct new meanings and secure authority. The adjective "traditional" indicates a conscious bestowal of status, so that the traditional corresponds with Raymond Williams' (2001) sense of selective tradition, in which culture is continually selected as a process.

### Conclusion

Folklore used as a patriarchal construct examines the theoretical and historical concepts of folklore and its uses to sustain a hegemonic culture of a nationhood and imaginaries. This is the written or understood archive of knowledge that is pedagogical, in the sense of sustaining mythical, heroic and godlike stories. I give international examples of how folklore is used for the politics of traditions and cultural capital under male dominated societies. This body of literature does not address folklore from a feminist perspective.

In response, we should attempt to deconstruct the discourses of folklore as 'archaic errors' found in songs, dance, poems and oral texts so that spiritual practices of condemned religious practices can move towards critical cultural studies. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006). In other spheres of public life, the contribution of folklore has been primarily dominated by men. Women's experiences and voices are not explicitly represented in these definitions, theories and examples. Lynn Meskell (1999) and Lauren Lengal (2004) are European folklorists concerned about the lack of scholarship

in international voices and issues that are attributed to a long history of women's oppression. Current anthropological folklore in archaeology (Meskell) sustains the study of feminism and history where pagans and goddesses can be traced back to ancient writings.<sup>4</sup> Forms of resistances in many third world countries, especially for women, are not taken seriously because they are buried within the margins of folklore studies, as a secondary form of "other" knowledge. What is clearly needed are studies that engage folklore as an educational pedagogy for the understanding of segregated histories. An ideology of folklore that includes third world folkfeminism can infuse the field with a methodology and purpose that acknowledges gaps in the scholarship. There is a need for a perspective that goes beyond oppression and seeks to legitimize folkdance, performance, the body and women's experiences as a space for both retaining and transforming traditions. This must encompass spirituality, rituals and expressive performance during specific times and spaces, in an effort to equally link the academic with the popular and a third world, gendered perspective with ethnic similarities and differences. To advance a comparative study of folklore as a pedagogical tool for women and a platform for change can be accomplished through the use of a folkfeminist lens, from which to examine the meaning of commonsense traditions. Such a methodology can help us to consider more closely what is at stake in our emancipatory efforts to explore the power relations and contradictions of women and folkdance practices.

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<sup>4</sup> Lynn Meskell studies Catalhoyuk, a symbol of a Great Turkish Goddess.



## CHAPTER 3

### CRITICAL THIRD WORLD FEMINISMS

*This then is the life force of women . . . which we are now reclaiming, in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives.*

(Lourde, 1978, p. 7)

The practice of third world feminism is a space to blur boundaries between the differences and similarities of women's experiences. The experiences and practices of women, at times successful or painful, is part of the plurality of dialogues and experiences of opposition as a collaborative practice. Women who are underrepresented in feminist practices, typically women from third world countries, can contribute to the ever-growing consciousness of our human condition. These practices continue to inform and teach us about the value of locating intercultural exchanges and how feminist practices have already existed in these areas. Critical Third World Feminisms is a concept that seeks to project a dialogic experience by combining intellect, self-awareness and corporeal presence to move across boundaries.

Women in education search for developmental restructuring in their efforts to educate women in third world countries. Women in third world countries, who emerge from a history of machismo and traditional roles in the home, are considered oppressed subordinates due to the fact that economic imbalances in the home create an oppressive system where maternal values and domestic responsibilities are disregarded (Blackmore 2000; Broadfoot, 2000; Mazo-Lopez, 1999; Sara-Lafosse, 1998; Steans 2000; Stromquist 1996, 1999, 2000; Stromquist, Lee, & Brocke-Utne, 1998; Sutton, 1998). Patriarchal discourses within transnational aid agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, divert attention from ethnographic research because

structural development agendas pay little attention to informal pedagogies. Although oppression is not questionable within these domestic spaces, there exists alternative perspectives on the establishment of relationships with communities in Latin America. Critical feminist knowledge provides an outlet for women to engage in discussions of self-worth and independence for survival, within an asymmetrical system of social relations.

Black feminist thought has also contributed in ways that engage research and theory as always partial and unfinished knowledge, where women have a space to unfold layers of the self and others. Such a perspective acknowledges that there is no one way of defining our world; but rather, it is through the politics of subjective experiences that interrogate the struggles and conflicts of patriarchal domination as we develop relationships with other women. We have come to understand the multiplicity of our subjective lives (Collins, 1991; Dillard, 2000; Duncan, 2003; Goodman, 2004; hooks, 1990, 2003b; Johnson-Bailey, 1999; McDowell, 1995).

Third world feminists and U.S Latina feminists push toward ethnic integrity and difference. Multiple cultures within ourselves are harmonious and inharmonious as the intercultural paths of being an insider/outsider contradict within our own lives (Bernal, 1998; Delgado-Gaitan, 1993; Sandoval, 1984; Solorzano, 2001). For example, belonging to native or indigenous cultures and a first world research community gives way to problematizing mixed identities within the construction of knowledge. Coming to know the past and sharing our critical experiences of third world and postcolonial feminisms within the U.S. have been crucial to determining how to cross world zones of

traditionalism, within the context of local subjective struggles (Anzaldúa, 2002; Hernandez, J., 2003; Smith, L., 1999; Spivak, 1986).

Third world feminisms raise questions about the alternatives between native as outside researcher and outside researcher as native (Amireh & Majaj, 2000; Jaschok, 2000; Minh-ha, 1989; Mohanty, 1998; Narayan, 1997; Shohat, 1998). And yet, it is also a tool of self-defense and conquest to locate difference within local contexts (Mazo-Lopez, 1999; Sampaio, 2004). All in all, sensitive relationships are created within these contexts which also include relations that are built on symbolic ties that are felt through dialogic interaction. Uma Narayan (1997) moved toward redefining what is meant by “tradition” and how these rituals play a part in establishing oppressive roles. She stands for a need to include the everyday practice of liberation among oppression and how women subvert patriarchy for survival and self worth. Kamala Visweswaran also (1994) explored the fictional, biographical and folkloric construction of ethnography in order to construct other possible worlds. At times being in multiple conscious positions becomes a question of not being overwhelmed, so as to not betray or fail either one of our cultures at any given moment. Part of voicing these problematic circumstances within researcher reflexivity and subjectivity becomes the contradiction. We examine research practices within ourselves, how we relate to our participants and how we recreate our homes away from home, in order to sufficiently fulfill the cross references between performativity, dialogue and textual analysis.

Critical Folkdance Pedagogy, as political forms of individual and group resistance, linked to critical feminisms as a lens to understand our situation within folklore dance movement, creates a rich theoretical foundation for positioning an

embodied politics of location through reflexive dialogues among situated standpoints of understanding. As such, the concerns of comparative education feminists, U.S. Black feminists and U.S Latina Feminists can help to bridge the credibility and legitimacy of traditional folklore as a body of knowledge that is performed out of varying subjective experiences. But despite the contributions that feminists have made in advancing research through feminist activism (Anzaldúa, 2002; Browning, 2006; Collins, 2000; Darder, 2002; Goodman, 2004; Hernandez, J., 2003; hooks, 2003a; Katrak, 2005; McRobbie, 2001; Mohanty, 1999; Sampaio, 2004; Sandoval, 1984; Stromquist, 2000), there is more research that needs to be conducted that links feminism, critical pedagogy, and folkdance practices as social activism.

### Why a Third World Feminism?

One of our limitations from a hierarchical viewpoint stems from the limited studies that represent third world women's lives and their own responses regarding their education. The informal pedagogies of third world women's contribution to feminist theory veers from the tradition of our established educational institutions. Contributions are acknowledged but it is imperative to reassess the position of critical third world feminisms as partial and personal. The dearth in of cultural information regarding third world women's contribution, in reference to comparative education studies, in part stems from agendas that must meet the requirements of overarching monetary funds. Feminist research in this field follows guidelines and assumptions based on a need to reform educational systems in underdeveloped nations. Critical Third World Feminisms has the inherent potential to provide a cultural platform that can be used to assess a

variety of educational currents, in order to balance the statistical and quantitative data that has already been collected by international agents of Third World development (IMF or the World Bank).

We can improve our educational system by learning and experiencing other educational cultures, rarely do we implement this knowledge to improve the present. A democratic position is certainly developing for women in Latin America or anywhere in the world. The absence of gender perspectives in global research agendas is a concern for the future, especially with global monetary funds at the forefront of making decisions that define democracy. Third World feminist researchers (Sara-Lafosse, 1998; Stromquist, 1996) have been active in the field of education raising questions and concerns that call for reevaluating women's roles in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Their focus is to disseminate information that supports women in subverting patriarchal structures, by introducing ways to critically question the definitions that have been produced on behalf of women regarding motherhood and sexuality. Physical and psychological violence is an unfortunate reality of societal norms and educational barriers. However, a dialogue of hope and courage should also engage in a discussion where motherhood and sexuality have also been positive forces in maintaining tradition. The well intended collaboration of First and Third world partnerships through economic development services locates women's struggles by pointing to the problems rather than the successes in both public and private spheres. The unilateral strategies of implementing frameworks and policies that are organized due to the benevolent motivations of reaching out to an underdeveloped is presumptuous and not always well received. For example, hooks (1990) described the

climate among women during a discussion for third world feminisms in an international conference, where feminists continue to re-install divisive groupings where representations of color, geographic locations and economic privilege continue to be distinguished as a hierarchy among women depending on the level of need and urgency for survival. In reference to the politics of representation for third world women, Gayatri Spivak (1999) questioned

the single issue of gender rather than class [that] gives unquestioning support to the financialization of the globe, which ruthlessly constructs a general will in the credit baited rural woman as it “formats” her through UN Plans of Action so that she can be “developed.” (p. 29)

The problem of both gender and class relations tied our own subjectivities as we witness injustices, is an essential piece of social change, but irrelevant unless the end result impacts our own educational deficiencies informally, formally and monetarily where equality is at the base of our intentions. According to Spivak (1999), writing has an intentional purpose to politicize voices, even though our efforts are repeatedly questioned and may feed into established power structures. The movement of postcolonial feminisms advances the work of women where it intersects with decolonizing patriarchal assumptions through an analysis of women’s resistance and the problems in postcolonial nations.

Many works stem from British colonial history, of course, but postcolonialism from feminist perspectives and specific locations have not been sufficiently studied from the viewpoint of local women’s lives and perspectives that stem from a history of Spanish colonial domination on the lands and shores of the Caribbean coast. The relative levels of emotive writing as praxis have their own cathartic undertones within

the spaces of history through a third world feminist lens. However, what are other alternatives, in addition to writing, where women find a space of solidarity. My aim is to find an alternative that is based on establishing presence as a voice towards resistance.

We must first take a look at how the body seen through dance has been historically exploited. Second, the unequal distribution of material goods makes it difficult for women to find opportunities to learn and voice their opinions. Their time is institutionally deprived and exploited where equal participation in formal or informal education to read, think or speak with others extremely limited. To recognize or acknowledge differences between cultures is one way to forge third world relationships. Furthermore, the common factor remains that economic hardships is the primary obstacle that limits education, independence and personal growth. Thus, how women solidify to overcome deficiencies, how they support their own personal growth and how they interpret it is essential for third world feminist practice. Visibility, collective identity and accountability need to be addressed to move past the mental barriers of inferiority, physical weaknesses and low self esteem that plague women's images.

### The Body and Third World Feminist Practice

The body is central if we are to advance a conceptual framework for critical dance pedagogy, where inner consciousness is built upon reassessing, confirming and perceiving how our bodies work in a plan of resistance. Engaging in a dialogue of how we can envision a new aesthetic of liberation is paramount to visualizing a feminist practice of resistance. Because the sexual, sensual, exotic, and natural of the female

body have played a seductive and mysterious role in a male dominated society, our current concepts of how we choose to move or not move our bodies in society is relative to part of how feminist dancing societies have shifted from the sacred to the profane. For this to take place, redefining a new aesthetic of our dancing bodies has potential to align and reclaim perspectives that allow our inhibited bodies to surface and flourish without shame or guilt.

A science that can bring together the best wisdom of past indigenous spiritual traditions with current techno-digital knowledges, with the purpose of exploring and affirming the multi-dimensional places where body, mind and spirit assemble, where spiritual work is seen as political work, where political work is seen as spiritual work, and where the erotics of love invest in both Becoming one such spiritual activist rewires one's brain, body and erotics, in a process that opens the apertures between worlds. Peoples meet there and transit to new perceptions. (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 25).

Many postcolonial women and women of the third world occupy marginal positions of subject agency in their home ground. "How can African, Asian, Indigenous American feminists reclaim their bodies and sexualities without producing the converse pathology of puritanical shame?" (Shohat, 1998, p. 28). Deborah Tolman (2003) asked how can girls experience pleasure in societies where there exists a dangerous potential for objectification and violation? Young girls are taught that that their sexuality is more of a danger than a pleasure. Anna McRobbie (2001) and Helen Thomas (1995) explored the outlet of creative expression in female subcultures, youth and identity. They both agreed that dance is also a category where women maintain identities and traditions where fantasy and self-expression offer more than just an escape from the strict codes of restricting our movement. Embracing our sexuality and nurturing a part of our core existence, is reclaimed by identifying the ways in which we have disassociated our



bodies and moving toward finding spaces where we can safely return to a part of our natural human instincts to act and move from a place that begins from inner motivations rather than the more common practices of physical attraction and social entertainment. Liberating our bodies, as Third World Feminists, comes from an inner expression, a corporal thought, a spiritual practice of joy, tied to a legacy of survival strategies in opposition to colonial repressions. When superficial guilt, for example, is supposed, sexualized and exoticized, it can be immediately rejected by the erotic, eros, love, universal life energy evolving within us. Audre Lourde (1978), in concert with Third World Feminism, introduced the erotic as a means to take ownership of our bodies, to be proud while seeking a space of self love in order to liberate ourselves from outside forces.

The body within a Third World Feminist perspective becomes the center of a politics of location that deconstructs traditional forms of patriarchal oppression by scoping the temporal spaces where women express their individual stories of liberation (Doann, 1988; McRobbie, 2001; Probyn, 1993). Being specific in identifying both the moments that tie acts of freedom and inner expression to the transitional spaces where movement fluctuates among our international homelands, our cultural integrity many times learned in the isolation of our homes where part of our humanity cannot be stripped of an essential part of our human nature.

To address the problem of third world visibility many times established through cultural performances, the inevitable male gaze in public and outside forces are the binary of a Third World Feminist practice. As to not reinforce the male and patriarchal perspective and discourses, a partial amount of space needs to be clearly expressed

through a consciousness of uneven social structures by unmasking harmful representations of class, gender and racial segregation located in films, movies or any mass media production. Any permanent artifact, representation of culture (Kaplan, 1997; Penley, 1988; Rose, 2001) that frames the female body in film and video production must expose the terms that define an aesthetic of beauty and body images that come from the value system of an already assumed White male audience, a fixed colonial gaze, a westernized world body. Redefining an aesthetic entails speaking to those whose personal histories and subjectivities respond to the constraints, which Bardo (1990) stated is the vehicle of transcendence. “The body is seen instead as the human making and remaking of the word, constantly shifting location, capable of revealing endlessly new ‘points of view’” (Bardo, p. 144). Social agencies for women from underrepresented cultures should always come from a position of inner expression and consciousness of being that moves from an inner space rather than an outer gaze. Moreover, the moments of social action and transformation against these traditional patriarchal views of the repressed feminine are always located in the body through an appreciation of self, from the outward conditioning to an inner consciousness (Russo, 1997; Thomas, 2003; Weiss, 1999).

Being comfortable and present in our bodies requires a harsh unveiling of how we have allowed ourselves to be absent as we have so often looked outward to find an inner acceptance of self. Again, countless studies have proved that this outward influence has carved a collective unconsciousness reflected in the perpetual visibility of dominant culture (Shohat, 1998) without a clear alternative of how to physically mobilize our bodies to accept our cultural differences to be whole and complete in

sharing and honoring and belong to an acceptable vision of beauty. Nicole Brossard stated that “a being who looks for her body and looks for the body of the other: this for me, this is the whole history of writing” (as cited in Minh-Ha, 1999, p. 259). If this is the case, writing ourselves and others into history is an inevitable part of moving our flesh into a human existence that is coupled with our thinking processes, ones that are tainted with a negative backtalk about how we feel about our bodies. Giving ourselves a place or space to physically, emotionally and psychologically tease out the harmful voices of an abusive and imaginary first world aesthetic, is determined in our writing and research.

As we move outside established boundaries and reexamine an alternative concept of beauty, we can begin to venture out from our proper and disciplined selves. What is considered ugly, spontaneous and uncommon, takes action as the body creates an outlet of unlimited spatial expression just as our intellectual desires also need a spaces to develop. June Jordan (1998) contemplated this continuous search for gender identity. Our purpose will go eternally unresolved if we, as feminists, search for an attitude that is continuously compared to the universal male body, voice, and war. “I am a woman, I am looking for reasons of pride in my gender identity. Given the international and the whole human historical context of gender inequality, where can I find them?”(p. 35). To embody the experience of liberation and fulfillment, how can we engage our bodies and perceive them as being central for moving toward any kind of emancipation? The history of writing about our bodies and the oppression of women can be counterproductive if we cannot apply ways to put our theories into beneficial action. Looking for our bodies through the body of the dominant culture, is denying

ourselves to reach a level of awareness that goes beyond the flesh. How our histories/ memories are revisited and played out in our minds purges ways in which our society has covered up our most valued feminine possessions. The solution to being set free from the turmoil of human conflict cannot come from any outside source. Our answers come from interjecting movement, within spatial restrictions where we have been physically schooled to be confined to following rules of orderly conduct that uphold traditions that dismantle or core at home, in schools and at work.

Dismantling the “master’s house” must clarify how the binary of extreme pride/extreme shame has been a harmful tool that reinforces inequality into the realm of “better than” competition. So that we are not caught within the field of patriarchal roots, acting out pride within our feminine bodies is not located in the same words, texts and histories, but rather in its own home ground as action and memory in order to carry the counter hegemonic seeds of feminism. The challenge is to focus on the midpoints of learning how and when to balance ourselves, knowing when to surrender and yield as an act of resistance of love, an essential part of survival that cushions the infectious spreading of anger and resentment toward the many frustrations of our socio-economic systems. The midpoint towards pacifying our volatile emotions are not necessarily stilled in our intellectual and thinking minds unless we explore how our physical and practices of personal growth first play out in our bodies and then are readdressed into our writing. The third world feminist movement arises out of forming such visions. As we develop a pedagogy of how to learn to reconnect with our bodies, we should also begin to ask ourselves to remember how our bodies represent freedom?

More specifically, a new aesthetic meaning involves valuing our core strengths as always grounded in self knowledge. The significance of our femininity postured by our abdominal core, pelvis, bones, lunar cycles, and the politics of our five senses in developing a movement energy. Our eyesight embodies a pedagogy between teacher and student, from one generation of women to another. We pay close attention to observing movements of simple, archaic or mundane concepts because our bodies absorb culture through imitation. Dances respond to sounds, we hear the drums, instruments, words, changing rhythms, silences, women's chanting and voices. Touch according to Hahn (2005) is personal, social, political, and negotiable. We can control our space and distance ourselves or we can be open to touch as learning potential to being civil, respectful and peaceful humans; inviting other to interact in our space to relearn the sacred nature of touch. These meanings are all negotiable and political because the impermanent or changing nature of our bodies always respond to the senses, either distancing us from our realities or embracing a suggestive, grounded and energetic capacity of human interaction.

Critical third world feminisms also value beauty as being simple and grounded in life, death and rebirth cycles, reflections of nature. Our feelings and senses are heightened as we learn through experiences and movements not found in the illusive permanency of books or religious scriptures. An aesthetic of body and dance seeks a process that can balance between both physical energy and spiritual energy as a private, inward and slow learning embodiment whose history cannot be entirely learned by fixed counting and memorization. These memories located in our body are ancient where the young teach the old and the old teach the young of how to remember freedom and

limitless spaces. An intergenerational, international and inter historical process is relevant through movement. Gloria Anzaldúa (2002) called these experiences the politics of touch, taste, smell and sight which gives rise to a core of an embodied community; it recreates a sanctity that rests on an equal plane, inwardly and outwardly conscious of movement of flesh that crosses boundaries and limitations we create for ourselves; a consciousness of our inner senses. It is precisely this interiorization or grounding of our space, despite origin, that counters the isolation of man made borders. Staking our place, then despite language or land, emphasizes our universal human need of our physicality to create other complex constructions of identity and the politics of embodied senses.

Holding an open fan close to me face, my eyes are hidden from view. From this private space I can peer out between the bones . . . as my fingers comfortably spread out along the bones and stretch to conjoin with them, the fan becomes a huge hand that extends my limb outward. (Hahn, 2005, pp. 80, 99)

With this physical visualization of an inner practice we can imagine a process of unification, community and solidarity that begins with an embodied consciousness, eyes, bones, fingers, hands and how this interiorization is transmitted through dance.

### Dance as Third World Feminist Resistance

Dance has the possibility of transferring and including essential knowledge from the perspective of ethnic/folk dances representing cultures from Africa, South America, and Asia, but not exclusively limited to these geographic spaces. Dance, broad in scope, is used both literally and metaphorically to describe certain basic human attitudes toward land, spirituality and gender relationships that continue to be performed. The

continuance of dance has potential of sharing universal principles embedded in the body, history and culture of people that contest colonial histories. To relocate what constitutes a dance and who are dancers as subjects, it is essential to highlight the practical meaning of dances situated in various dance histories and contexts. Creating a language of dance resistance for women requires taking a closer look at women's aesthetic repositioning as that is inward, private and sensual as well as highly visual. Movements are ancient, spiritually connected to land, agriculture and ancestor worship and femininity is central to its embodiment.

Where political climates attempt to control and sanction cultural rituals, autonomous communities maintain dance traditions as a strategy to preserve history as counter memory. For example, the Sakha Republic, to the northwest of Russia during the Soviet period maintain the Ohoukai folkdance as a folkdance as a resistance toward political domination. During Stalin's 1928 efforts to dominate a national identity in order to glorify Soviet ideology, the Ohoukai dance survived as a communal prayer tied to nature, ancestral reverence, spirituality and autonomous identity both through song and dance. This peaceful action of defiance toward the communist government is currently taught in national schools as part of a new school movement (Crate, 2006 ). A symbolic mural of the dance with people holding hands in an unshakeable circle among a revolution represents the following:

We have Perestroika  
It is hard now with the market system  
But anyway, we will have dance and live through it  
Don't be afraid,  
Dance and be happy (p. 175)

Dances are spaces where energetic momentum of tradition is negotiated and renegotiated against the patriarchal backdrop because it reifies national and regional identities. In the other hand, traditionalizing can be a problematic political tool to oppress women. In Malawi, Africa<sup>5</sup> for example, “politicians entice women to dance with promises of material remuneration, so they appropriate women’s performative bodies to further their own goals again within discourse about its traditionality” (Gilman, 2004, p. 36).

Yvonne Daniel (1998) studied *Rumba* and its varied meanings as part of working class cultures. As a national dance, Rumba is an expression of *communitas*. As such, it educates the public toward government objectives, while also serving as an expression of spirituality and where women search to be “possessed” by *vacunao*. When performed for Afro-Cuban and Cuban artists, it reflects creativity and artistic freedom. But, stated Daniel, “the main personages, the Cuban and United States government officials are the long awaited rumberos. The rumba circle is prepared; why don’t they dance the rumba of respect and interdependency together?” (Daniel, 1998 p. 492). The Cuban *Rumba*, as a community survival and spiritual ritual, is far removed from the meanings of current ballroom dances.

Another example working class expression is given by Joel Streicker (1998), who conducted ethnographic work on *Champeta*, a more recent type of Reggae and African derived dance in Cartagena, Colombia, to describe “indecent” in women’s behaviors. Streicker looked at ethnography from the viewpoint of the elite and admitted

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<sup>5</sup>The Bantú tribe is in Malawi. Aquiles Escalante has found artifacts in Colombia that connect the Bantú with Afro-Colombians on the Atlantic Coast.



he did not give the performers a chance to speak as he recognized his privileged position as a male researcher within the Atlantic Coast culture. In his conclusion, women's expressions were policed by race, class, and gender boundaries.

In rural China, Pui-Lam (2005) described folk religion in China as instilling patriarchal lineages through ancestor worship. Although women are the ones doing the worshipping they are perpetuating male ancestry to maintain Chinese religious culture. This is true for most dances in South Asia, where women embody a rich history of representing historical information of religion,<sup>6</sup> rituals, and goddesses (Jonas, 1992), but there are not many instances where these dances have been studied to reflect social change and resistance in South Asian folk dances (Diamond, 2003). "Folk" in this region reflects lower castes, and "classical" dances represent higher castes. In "Memoirs of a Geisha," an inner wisdom of memory, nostalgia, and experience reflects an attitude of a confident woman. Despite the oppression, a woman's resistance and empowerment comes out of and through the language of dance, corporeal expressions and especially the astuteness that comes from shifting performances between both public and private spaces. These are shared stories of dance, almost a universal code that embodies a potential for women's empowerment even among oppression during and after World War II. More critically, however, after United States retaliation, the use of cultural symbols as a form of commodity, the Geisha, once seen as the epitome of man's desire is bought and trapped in the world of consumption. Geisha also becomes a part of a nostalgic time period, marked by Edward Said's (1979) problematic stance on

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<sup>6</sup> Shinto priest quote theology and dance.

“orientalism,” making foreign or ethnic dances part of a consumable product for Westerners.

Because dances provide a more conscious relationship to the ground and earth where actions are physically being performed and where symbolic motions project harvests, working the land and reverence toward nature’s cycles echoes ecofeminist traditions as well. An ecofeminist belief system asserts that

the preservation of the earth will require a profound shift in consciousness, a recovery of a more ancient and traditional view that reveres the profound connection of all beings into the web of life and rethinking a relation of both humanity and divinity in nature. (Mack-Canty, 2004, p. 7)

Traditional sources of an active connection to the earth begin with women’s central core, a consciousness of movement where women can gain a sense of power, intellectual autonomy, and courage to move forward. Ecofeminist theory, rooted in the sanctity of preserving nature contributes to reestablishing postcolonial resistance where movements are rooted as part of an expression of identity, ones that act out and embody a sense of belonging to the land as if revering the ground. The romantic, nostalgic, or utopic expressions of dance as the way people relate to the earth opposes the divisive concept of what constitutes culture or civilized according to European colonizers. Third world feminist dance may be considered reflections of the sacred human body that is an extension of life and the simplest form of recovering from any kind of oppression. The representations of land, tradition and nature in founded in movement traditions is a feminist resource because past, present and future performances break down the old patterns of a fixed colonial landscape by dancing all over them.

### *The Myth of Women's Dances*

Dances have changed from the sacred to the profane, becoming acts that serve to satisfy male curiosity as a form of entertainment. However, matriarchal histories have used dance to awaken or shed light on the divine connection of feminine energy to the earth by being intuitively connected to nature. These were held in private areas where women would get together and express their joys frustrations and hopes coming closer to the divine. Women then became the mediators between heaven and earth and occupied spiritual spaces in temples as priestesses and goddesses connecting the lunar cycles (much like the Islamic calendar) of night and dark to mystical feminine energy.

According to Rosina Fawzia Al-Rawi (2003), matriarchal societies influenced by lunar cycles were slowly replaced by the predominant measuring of time, light and day where male dominated societies focused on replacing women's rituals of dance as part of a lunar connection. Solar mythology then prevailed. Before these changes occurred, in most ancient stories or myths that describe the beginning of life, as in the Middle East<sup>7</sup> in 4500 BC and Asia, the archetype of woman was embodied through dancing as a form of transitioning between the two worlds. The underworld filled with darkness, death, seduction and the unknown was protected by the dancing heroine

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<sup>7</sup>“When Ishtar's husband Tammouz died and returned to the world of darkness, the womb of the earth, Ishtar decided to save him by craft and to bring back light. She dressed up in all of her splendor, tied a gridle around her hips and donned seven vials to enter the netherworld through the seven gates. The goddess of love danced seductively at each gate each time leaving one veil to gain entrance. At the seventh gate she removed the last veil. During the whole of her stay in the underworld, all life on earth stood still, deprived of love, growth and celebration. Only when Ishtar returned, fully veiled to shield her secret from human eyes, did life on earth blossom again. Her reunion with Tammouz was celebrated every year at the beginning of spring and symbolized the reawakening of nature and life” (Fawzia Al-Rawi, 2003 p. 31).

goddess who unveiled the secrets of the unknown to give light to growth, love and celebration on earth.

Since women embodied sacred knowledge through dance, as in the case of Buddhist Shinto dances (2000 BC), dancers would be forced to perform for the empires as a sign of submission because this was perceived as a handing over of history and culture which also solidified cultures in such a way that allowed dance practices to thrive in royal, imperial or colonial court dances. Dancers were considered deities because of the knowledge and ability to communicate with gods as well as methods of persuasion among those in power. If women were considered links to divinity, then why did they change? During the advancement of civilization in Egypt (1600-1200 BC), dances emperors, pharaohs and ruling class maintained their own worship dances while the popular class, the peasant class and slaves used it as an expression of social life as well as a tool where women would seduce and be a form of entertainment for the ruling class.

Where the slow transition of dance as a symbol of awakened joy, praise, respect, and fertile sexual energy occurred (as seen in the dancing rituals for the goddess Demeter who represented fertility for both agriculture and maternity), the spontaneity was lost to formality and standardization during the Greek, Roman, and Christian civilizations, whereby losing the organic nature of temple worship. The Greeks too danced for weddings, change of seasons, war, victory and to overcome depression and even mental illness. Greek dances were performed during Roman celebrations honoring Bacchus (27 BC-427 AD) but otherwise upper class Romans began to 'intellectualize' dance.

For the Greeks, *musike* was a comprehensive understanding of song, dance and instrumental music. Aristotle promoted the expressive arts and encouraged citizens to participate in order to purge emotions. However, for fear of promoting cultural mixtures from Arabic lands and foreign cultures, he reserved dance strictly as a profession for slaves, ex slaves and foreigners. Distancing foreign dance practices was a strategy to maintain the illusion of a homogenous culture. St. Augustine (353-430 BC) denounced dance as a corporal behavior yet accepted aspects of its spiritual nature. Moreover, as women's bodies, and especially dancing bodies, became the epitome of physical shame they too were incompatible with Christian doctrines, and shunned from any legitimate form of spiritual pursuits. Therefore sexual and spiritual energy once held as sacred was deemed immoral as women became the bearers of the original sin in Christian mythology.

The Catholic Church replaced the timespace festive behavior with the Sabbath day which became a replacement for midweek festivals and holidays. In 19th century England, there was an attempt to remove all moments of play from the lives of their community (Riggio, 2004). The Protestant reformation also banned any dance or anything beautiful from church. This marks clear divisions and distinctions of dominant western characteristics, where teaching to tame the body corresponds to the Anglo interpretation of Christian doctrines.

Now during industrialization and modernization, dominant culture's myths about dance have been inherited by these historical traditions and male dominated religious doctrines that have secluded, isolated individuals. Our dependency on material gains, scientific reason and technology has lead to a loss of corporeal communications,

replacing dance as an essential part of a symbolic life, death, and nature cycle of the human condition.

### *Wild Dance of Resistance*

As we emerge away from hiding or shaming our bodies, to build upon the discourse of postcolonialism, a third world feminist view must turn to other familiar identifications where the weight of resistance rests in our bodies, a direct way to feel our freedom. During the Middle Ages while coupled court dancing restrained the torso, gypsies kept introducing the lively sensual and earthly pelvic dances, like belly dancing. Non-conforming gestures and community dances came from Afghanistan and Turkey, Egypt and Spain, challenging western dance; where popular dancing traditions have all passed down from one generation to the next. "Dance as an embodied politic that extends the lines of territory 'the wild reserve' of the body provides precisely through its extralinguistic aspects of movement and mobility, a further territory for the polis to conquer" (Ram, 2000b, p. 358). The emergence of liberation through dance cannot be present without first redefining the physical and earthy connections made through intentional movements that live in our senses. Any kind of movement that departs from the social norm may be considered dances of resistance much like the "wildness" of the Kabuki in dance that is popular today in Japan, meaning the unusual or avant-guard dances that departed from the norm as a (ka) song (bu) dance (ki) skill. (Hahn, 2005). Wild in many cases suggests non-conformity and freedom from state rules and boundaries. Dances as feminist liberation may be linked to nature without being naturalized nor excluded from any geographic location. Similarly, Clarissa Estés (1995) teaches us to not be afraid to embody the "Wild Woman" archetype. We must learn to

not be afraid to detangle our “not so beautiful bones” with a song or dance that courageously moves into unknown places. The search for women’s equality

does not require a woman to be a certain color, a certain education, a certain lifestyle or economic class . . . in fact it cannot thrive in an atmosphere of enforced political correctness or by being bent into old burnt-out paradigms. It thrives on fresh sight and self-integrity. It thrives on its own nature. (p. 37)

This nature requires one to be both grounded in a belief system that lends itself toward moving across it, as we search for a politic of movement to be embodied by anyone who takes a conscious risk of being watched, observed and who is adamant about pulling others into the unknown spaces. If dance is to be considered a political space of resistance, where does it begin for each of us?

#### *The Dance of Sacred Land*

Dance memory and reflection forms part of a cultural heritage as well as a projection of personal experiences onto the many past, present and future stages of resistance. The Ghost Dance, as James Youngblood Henderson (2000) described, is a resistance toward colonialism.

It was a vision of how to release all the spirits contained in the old ceremonies and rites. The dance released these contained spirits or forces back into the deep caves of mother Earth, where they would be immune to colonizers strategies and techniques. (p. 54)

In other words, the concept of understanding dance as a reflection of nature and mother Earth, is also a path towards a consciousness of tradition. Without naturalizing, a wealth of power comes from the cultivation of both harvests cycles sharing similar traditions in Greeks and Roman festivities. More recent dance festivities in communities, like the Ohouakai Dances in former Soviet Union or Native American Rain Dances (Leuthold, 1998) are also linked to an appreciation and solidarity where their dances were directly

linked to cultivation, harvests and weather which also served to solidify cultural identities despite its seeming decline within their respective nations. Khmer dancers, mainly women, were believed to be a medium between the gods and mortals. Their folkdances served religious, purposes among many others to transmit peace, fertility, prosperity of their kingdoms.

These concepts may seem simplistic, archaic or folkloric from a Euro Christian standpoint because they do not focus on dogmas or theology; however, dance as ritual permeates in the populace in the same fashion through many other dancing cultures that have retained dance, where experience and existence undergirds the obsession to name, and align history in through the ages of war and conquest. Due to the fact that rituals have the tendency to stress action more than thought, the average person may not understand the deeper meaning and has the potential to lose its purpose, the universality of these dances at times with vague histories have been defined by nations and empires.

According to Gerald Jonas (1992), after the Vietnam War, in efforts to restore the countries legitimacy as a nation, the government made it a priority to reestablish itself by looking for dancers and teachers of dance. This was not an easy task since most royal dancers were imprisoned and killed in order to eradicate what were considered the folklore seeds of feudalism. However, after the war, restoring people's culture meant finding teachers and students who embodied knowledge through folkdance. Dances were retained through memory and survived in the forests of Cambodia and Thailand. This is an example of how women embody, retain and pass along history from one generation to the next, captured as a performative resistance of past and present to struggle against the destruction of their freedom. Telling stories through corporal



communication was once part of the national consciousness and at present the relationship among teachers and students serves to relay these oral and corporal memories tied to their spiritual heritage. At present dance performances combine both modern and revolutionary themes of human experience both in the U.S and abroad. The Khmer Classical Dance Troop continues to perform classical tradition of classical Cambodian culture.<sup>8</sup> What exactly do these dances teach us? What do they mean? In 1767, the Ariori in Tahiti did not consider dances as shameful, where acts of pleasure and sexuality were considered a aspect of human interaction, play and merriment. The Ariori dance's foundational purpose was to distinguish among gender as well as to celebrate the harvests and what is considered similar to the Roman Saturnalia festivities. The Ariori dances were prohibited by Captain Cook's colonization in 1842 due to their sexual nature as was the case for many other colonized regions. At present some traces of the Ariori dancers and dances can still be seen in the Tamure dance. More recently, Tahitians internalize this dance as "I am young, healthy and attractive. I know who and what I am, and I am happy with myself" (Jonas, 1992, p. 19).

In the study of classical Indian/Hindu dance and how it is interpreted within the lens of Diaspora and immigration, keeping dance culture alive actually intensifies as it clashes with western culture. Indian dance brings forth a language of unquestionable sexual morality and respect towards the private as a part of womanhood. Femininity in this case has its own goddess-like spiritual core that blurs the national boundaries. The artistic expression in public spaces can be considered a proclamation of feminine pride. The caste system distinguishes between classical dance and folkdances due to the fact

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<sup>8</sup> See [www.enigmamaterial.com](http://www.enigmamaterial.com) and [www.angelfire.com](http://www.angelfire.com) to locate information and current performances.

that the former is taught in schools and the latter is taught in the street. In an effort to promote human equality, comparing private and public dances could expose these harmful stereotypes and gender and class differences found in the caste system. Only girls and women perform, as it is an accepted gendered behavior, but one that potentially makes it difficult to justify agency and subjectivity without first considering how dance technique oppresses or liberates women dancers. For example, despite the class differences among folk dances and classical dances (Diamond, 2003), the Natya Sastra dance (Ram, 2000a) “vividly portrays the cooking process, vegetables, meat, sauces and spices infused with emotional senses of love, grief, anger, energy, fear, disgust and wonder” (p. 3). The woman that follows the traditional domestic roles is portrayed but also revered and humanized by intense emotion as the women; in this scenario know how to infuse land as physical survival as well as to evoke emotional integrity. Dance resistance questions the implications of maintaining tradition and whether or not these practices are considered safe or harmful for engaging women. To understand the ways that stifle our growth must also include historical and collective processes, the emotional, psychological, lived experience and social agency by interrogating the processes that lead up to decolonizing our bodies (Darder, 2007).

The embodiment of dance is linked both historically to cultural survival that depended on working in marginal areas such as sugar cane fields, seashore ports and mountainous agricultural areas where groups may have solidified cultural expressions while responding to economic pressures and demands. Being indigenous to the land, knowing the land, sharing the qualities of land-wisdom can potentially balance extreme fixation on our digital/technological world. An aspect of postcolonial studies is to locate

ways in which subalterns more specifically women, continue to resist the on-going inequalities of violent colonial histories. Nationhood, as a patriarchal construct, must reflect a feminist viewpoint. As Morton-Robinson (2005) argued “indigenous people are subjects in relationship with the landscape and are capable of giving new evaluations and meanings to inherited cultural forms which remain expressive of our living tradition and changed circumstances” (p. 86).

Dances reenact values through the artistic, physical, and creative activity as being beneficial for the group community because many of the group values, morals and belief systems are reflected in the context of dance in which self-development is freely given and projected out into the world. Basic morals rituals and celebrations are to be told or enacted; however, while many are similar in their intent to produce harmony and peace, colonizers or religious figures feared they would be violently used to project evil manifestations. Many dances were banned because of fear of indigenous rebellion, fear of the unknown which created problems in colonizing other cultures. In Asian cultures, folkdances were regarded as an essential knowledge for getting to the central force of a people. In effect, peasant folkdances were taught to the empires or ruling classes as a sign of allegiance where both colonizer and colonized were able to interact through dance. As we see in the Kmer or Shinto folkdances, the rulers appropriated these dances which became emblematic expressions for the life of the peasant and working class (Sam, 1987). As in the Buddhist Kmer *trod* dance, the story of good over evil is told in the Cambodian culture. *Trod folkdance*, meaning cutting off the old and bringing in the new, is performed for New Year. In this folk story, becoming a better human sometimes involves guidance from ancestors or higher powers

who have gone through similar processes. The quest for personal enlightenment of a Bodhisattva (one destined for perfect enlightenment) can overcome obstacles with the help from Brahma, Indra and other Devas/Devatas (gods and goddesses).

The solidarity can be located in festive time spaces where many cultures convene in rejoicing and celebrating a didactic story that is remarkably similar from one culture to the next. The stories or myths that revolve around dancing demonstrate a communal act of appreciation and transformation of how we are eternally linked to the earth and to the sky or heavens. It is simply a way of life that comes from within and is projected out as if confirming our existence and awareness of others. One of Joseph Campbell's (1988) stories grounds this idea of movement as a potential for transcending complex philosophical assumptions with the simplicity connoted through dance. To experience the essence of a culture, is not merely an intellectual quest but one founded in movement.

In Japan for an international conference on religion Campbell overheard another American delegate, a social philosopher from New York, say to a Shinto priest, "we've been now to a good many ceremonies and have seen quite a few of your shrines. But I don't get your ideology, I don't get your theology." The Japanese paused as though in deep thought and then slowly shook his head. "I think we don't have ideology," he said. "We don't have theology. We dance." (p. xix)

It seems that the religious belief system of many non-westernized cultures emphasize a learning about how to live our daily lives through a celebratory attitude rather than through the religious doctrines of suffering and sacrifice. At present, the Geisha odori dances are observed as either a common *su odori*, or street parade dancers *awa-odori* (Matida, 2005). Although perspectives from sacred to common was brought about after WWII, dances and celebrations have been deeply embedded in Japanese

myth<sup>9</sup>, where goddesses had their place in projecting light into the dark ages, similar to the middle east dance myths.

Of course the moral here is that violence, destruction and darkness can be reversed when all groups can enjoy life through merrymaking and dance. Other cultures also view dance as a way toward spiritual enlightenment where our bodies are primordial in establishing an innermost embodiment of self linked to the whole. The playing of a top-down concept, according to Hindu scripture, *maya lila*, emphasizes that the world exists as a playing of gods, who are the authorities that encourage it [celebration] (Devananda, 2000). To play “is to be in tune with cosmic processes and their self transformations. To be in play is to reproduce, time and again, the very premise that informs the existence of this kind of cosmos” (p. 44). One of the most popular Hindu god Siva is the symbolic metaphor for the cosmic dancer because he/she is the rhythmic interplay of death and birth, creative and destructive energy. represented through dance. Here “we are picturing an eternal dance of creation and destruction, which is the basis of all natural phenomena, the basis of all existence” (Devananda, p. 51).

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<sup>9</sup> Amaterasu-Omikami (“Great Heaven Shining Deity”), greatly incensed at the violence and the ungodly deeds of Susanowo-no-Mikoto, hid herself in the heavenly rock cave. As a consequence the eternal night of darkness prevailed. All of the gods were greatly dismayed, and much to their inconvenience all business had to be transacted by artificial light. There upon a council of “eight million gods” was summoned on the dry bed of the “Heavenly River of eight currents,” and it was decided that Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto should, in company with other gods, perform an inspired religious dance before the cave. Thereupon Amaterasu-Omikami considered, “How is it that the Gods can enjoy such merrymaking when the world is wrapped in darkness as it has been since I shut myself up in this cave!” So saying, she opened the cave door very slightly, and secretly peered out into the joyous scene. Then, as had been planned, Ame-no-Tatikarawo-no-Mikoto opened wide the rock cave door and induced the goddess to come out of the cave and to occupy the new palace they had constructed for her. This dance, performed by Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto is said to have been the first dance ever given in Japan (Matida, 2005, p. 18).

Dances typically viewed as evil pagan behaviors instilled fear, myths of potential corruption and wrong doing. To trace the development of western philosophy and religious doctrines is too large in scope for this project. But these are just to name a few mythic references that respond to dance as a symbolic representation of moral, value and ethical practices. The interpretation of philosophy of dance as an educational potential is vast and rich sharing both universal qualities that either thwart celebrations or encourage them. Regardless, these are examples that lead us to question why dance, with few exceptions, has been eliminated from our overarching manuscript for our western society.

To look at dance as personal growth and empowerment for women involves sharing histories of movement and how they fit into current situations. The purpose of third world dance as resistance begins with memories and moments where women perform and act as subjects promoting their own freedom and resistance not captured in history books or literary sources. The following series of memories serves as an autoethnographic reflection that marks the first time I experienced the meaning of resistance reflected during carnival season, the attitude of critical third world dance is dialogic on societies' attempt to either structure dance and the individual's need for autonomy. Resistance, given life in the body, is a natural progression for our human expression. Leaving the confines of a conservative society taught me at a young age, that a consciousness of freedom is many times found within and outside of our physical boundaries and systems.

## Freeing the Body: An Autoethnographic Experience

As a child, my mother pulled me out of class to celebrate the Carnival of Barranquilla. I never really understood what was behind her excitement and I know I never will fully understand. For an 8 year old from Kankakee, I was out of control breaking the laws of my community and in Barranquilla; I was learning to free my spirit. We were supposed to be crying about the death of Joselito, according to my cousin, the symbolic man who died from too much drinking and dancing. My cousins, aunts, and I took out all of my grandma's pots and pans, filled them with water, knocked on the neighbors' doors, and threw the cold water in their faces, soaking them and laughing as hard as we could. They laughed and soaked us right back. I do not ever remember having as much fun or laughing until stomach cramps forced me to cry tears of joy. The cold water on the pavement put a halt to the usual "que tronco de calor" complaints about the scorching sun and helped toughen my virgin feet by keeping them cool after a whole day of a home made water park bonanza. Pretty soon the whole barrio was in a balloon-pots-pans-hose-bag water war. Instead of topping our masterpiece off with a pleasant "see you later," we opened up box upon box of cornstarch and only stopped until we were blinded from throwing handfuls of it into each other's faces; chaos and pandemonium at its finest. No one ever got angry since the "innocent" children were the masterminds behind this cultural production. This was our production. I had never felt so free and unrestricted as I felt during this moment. Its sensation sparked my curiosity, and I look for that same experience to get me through my long days at work in my cubicle. I did not need to go far to find what I was looking for, of course, all of these experiences were embodied in my mother who tried to pass

them on to me in Bourbonnais. We called our home a “burbuja Barranquillera” or “Barranquillan bubble.”

Later on that night, my aunts pulled my mother’s crown out of the dresser. It was a rusty old crown, a corroded trophy with a few missing diamonds that proved the legacy about my mother being queen at 17<sup>10</sup>, the catalyst of every party, entrancing the men with her sacred tools, her big bottom. She was proud of her body flaunting it every time during the “tapas” dance, a cumbia also understood as the butt dance, translated literally into “dancing lids.” At first, I was embarrassed because she showed everyone her sense of security through dancing, which seemed like a naturally god-given trait for any woman or young girl from Barranquilla. However, from kindergarten on through college, I spent several summers learning how to dance contemporary and folk dances, usually with friends at the local outdoor bodega in Barranquilla and in my home in Bourbonnais. No matter how insecure I was about my body as a teenager, I somehow managed to blend in and be accepted. Dancing has always helped me be accepted anywhere I go, weaving in and out of North American and South American cultures.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> As I turned hundreds if not thousands of pages at the Aduana, archive for El Heraldo, I stumbled upon my mother’s picture. I recognized her from the original homemade black and white album. (Trini Estrada es la Pimera Candidata de “El Lucero.” 1962, January 25. *Diario Caribe*.)

<sup>11</sup> Some friends and I went to a salsa club in Boston and a middle-aged man asked me to dance. I asked him if he was a good dancer, he said he was “alright.” I responded “I am not so good with counting my moves.” I soon realized that the man was arrhythmic; his counted moves didn’t flow with the music. I soon found myself in tension with him on one side and the music on the other as he twisted me from one side to the other. I felt clumsy as I failed in recovering his dance bloopers from drawing too much attention. After one song he turns to me and says “You know, some day you’ll be a great dancer, you are really sensitive to movement.” I politely said thank you.. This man’s salsa-fever fad demanded structure, counting, rules and names for salsa techniques that I was still “understanding.” In a matter of three seconds he validated himself and devalued my sensitive movements by how poorly I followed his lead. He was right though; I am very sensitive when it comes to interpreting dance. The previous day, a Brazilian girl embraced us and mistook us for Brazilian after samba dancing for three hours, what a compliment! “Voce no fala Portuguese?” She was surprised at our verbal miscommunication and switched to English by default and said “Do you know what the singer said to you?” We responded, “No,



Now, dancing is a refuge, a place of therapeutic healing, a corporal dialogue with myself and my body.

In concert, Critical Third World feminisms envisions a reduction in the concept of spectatorship or commercialization, by shifting the performative aspects in favor of women's individual experiences, the subjectivity of performance, and towards the transformational qualities of stories of successes and failures. Asking questions about its overall survival and practice should also be answered by the women who reinforce tradition. Encouraging a dialogue where women share their perspectives and experiences is a space that has not been easy to establish as a critical third world dialogue of folklorized nations. It is precisely this dialogue that is central to the evolution of a critical folkdance pedagogy where a critical praxis of the body must seek to contend in the flesh with the embodied histories of the disenfranchised, as well as the social and material forces that shape the conditions in which we teach and learn (Darder, 2007).

### Conclusion

The relationship between postcolonial lands and the corporeal language of dance is a starting point into crossing geographical boundaries and embracing an embodied cultural context where women from the Third World represent their experiences of critical dance as we begin to detangle an oppressive and liberating consciousness of dance. It grows out of a need to understand pieces of our ancestral matrices, sparking

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we don't speak Portuguese." She said, "He asked if you wanted a slap in the face and the three of you stood up clapping and cheering!"

our memories and representing “thirdworldness” as a process that sheds light on history as dynamic and changing. These spaces of interest open up possibilities for third world discussions of indigenous contributions. Women theorists navigate tirelessly beyond the scope of patriarchy searching for new words that build new worlds that go back and forth from a human race of scientific reason to a place of affirming self-value even among contradiction. The partiality of feminist knowledge reformulates questions that begin with a positive outlook, while not entirely dismissing the material limitations for survival.

To contemplate Critical Third World Feminisms, especially since it implies hierarchical academic structures, also entails envisioning, in contrast, a horizontal rather than vertical wheel of common purpose to balance the revolutionary principles through the work of other feminists who have deconstructed countless thought processes to implement social change that includes any marginalized practice, such as dance. Furthermore, the reciprocity among Third World feminisms should also engages in the possibility of creating a space where thirdworldness is now an independent child that can also teach the aging mother. As such, critical Third World feminisms might hold a key to gaining momentum within the context of progressive feminist struggles for liberation.

Third World Women’s general resistance to those in power and a longing to be heard and understood globally, collectively, and subjectively as intellectuals, are foundational to opening possibilities into the cultural panorama of promoting, diversity and peace. Crossing ocean, land, and language borders is an ideal plan for women to begin bridging ideas and sharing stories that are shifting in and out of historical

situations. As such, a critical literary rooted in an emancipatory tradition, is attentive to the use of the body and how women weave in and out of public and private spaces, in addition to linguistic differences, performance-based practices, and the socio- psycho interpretations, all central to a polifacetic embrace of libratory struggle.

## CHAPTER 4

### CRITICAL FOLKDANCE PEDAGOGY

Critical folkdance pedagogy pulls from festive carnival cultures as an expression of postcolonial working class resistance. Minimizing the gaps between the street stage and the theatrical stage, the spectator and the actor borrows from performance theories that assert the moral and ethical obligations for representing the imbalances in order to address social injustices (Denzin, 2006; Geertz, 1973; Turner, 1988). The implications of the economic drive to sell cultural capital as carnival culture and staging counter memories through the art of folkdance reflects a need to address ethnic, class and gender perspectives. As such, critical folkdance pedagogy as praxis moves toward understanding the emancipatory possibilities of folkdance in order to address the problem of the immobile student body in classrooms. Combining the liberty seeking carnival ideology with the various uses of staging cultural politics can lead towards a consciousness of an embodied resistance that reinvents a sense of community and solidarity of self and other.

#### Folkdance as Pedagogy

The rising of folk and popular culture within the festive moves into the public eye of street culture, where social statements are renegotiated in response to government corruption, oppression and a drive to represent regional identity, a complicated process within the economic drive of Carnival practices (Friedemann, 1985). Much like Bakhtin's (1984) interpretation of Rabelais' renaissance and the lens

of carnivalesque rapture of the peasant class, carnival is a metafictional tale lived through the realities and experiences of folk.

Carnival must not be confused with mere holiday or, least of all, with self-serving festivals fostered by governments, secular or theocratic. The sanction for Carnival derives ultimately not from a calendar of prescribed by church or state, but from a force that preexists priests and kings and to whose superior power they are actually deferring when they appear to be licensing Carnival. (p. xviii)

In addition, Bakhtin asserted that these subversive tendencies are exclusive to festive timespaces that reify class differences and restricts contestation outside of festive celebrations. On the other hand, given the dynamic between Africans who endured the Middle Passage, Natives who also maintained autonomous cultures in the New World and the integration of Europeans the continuances of folkdance practices are shared by Caribbean cultures who have also responded to corruption since the beginning of the 16th century. Resisting territorial regionalism and national divisions surface out of a need to establish ethnic integrity and socio-historic representation within the context of festive periods are an active socio-political drive to represent one's own identity where the possibility of social transformational practices is based on the uses of folkdance as a grass roots expression.

Carnival and the festival theories have been essential to understanding concepts of role reversals between race class and gender as postcolonial studies and ethnic studies that link resistances between the working class and the ruling class (Aching, 2002; Bakhtin, 1984; Danticant, 2003; Fabre, 1984; Falasi, 1987; Gilmore, 1998; Guillermoprieto, 1990; Guss, 2000; Mason, 1998; Mesnil, 1987; Riggio, 2004; Russo, 1997; Ware, 1997). Furthermore, the dialectical relationship between the people who drive folkdances and carnival as an overarching enterprise, is an organic relationship for

manifesting social transformation and revolutionary practices. For example, Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) and Alejandro Falassi (1987) underscored the revolutionary tendencies of free expression that take place during carnival season.

Amidst the competitive nature of life driven by materialism and consumer demands, the modern festive society requires balancing the production of folklore. Festivals in Venezuela, for example, grounded in African resistance (Guss, 2000) requires an anthropological understanding of how people combine the modern and traditional, consistently mobilizing a mixture of identities that drive entrepreneurial nature of festive cultures but who also contend with massification of the tradition. In addition, where folklore as people's expressions are driven by families and women in places in Colombia like La Chamba (Duncan, 2003), the qualitative processes of subsistence is a family oriented folk craft that involves the transformation of raw material into art. Once the art is reproduced for mass consumption, then according to Duncan, the art forms are no longer a folk tradition but rather objects for mass consumption. Women who hand down folk knowledge intergenerationally contend with the idea that traditions are non-profit seeking and yet they must also subsist by selling their folk art. The naming of folklore as a raw and organic tradition does not lose its foundation once it is mass produced. The nature/culture divide should no longer be based on creating a false dualism between an authentic original or a massified duplicate without understanding how women respond to these every day processes. In addition, Olga Supek's study on Croatian carnivals (1988) and Alma Guillermoprietos' study on impoverished samba dancers (1990) have contributed to the various strands of collective identity and survival and oppression from a feminist standpoint. This includes

radical expression of sexual freedom through dance and crafting a hyper- natural choreography that explicitly demonstrates dancing and carnival as an embodiment of freedom for women within oppressive regimes. As Barbara Browning (2006) asserted, a “choreographic” pedagogy is produced where the working class labor market is both sexually intensive and labor intensive and these mixtures insist that we look and remember them. For example, folkdance pedagogy can expose contemporary problems by revisiting the raw-like stereotypes of bogas, beaches and mysterious gatherings under campfires, in order to denaturalize and demystify the folklore genre for the benefit of human equality. Contextualizing indigenous knowledge that promotes individual expression and historical representation is a legitimate practice that embraces the spirit of the past, evoked as authentic tradition because it moves in and out from a performer’s imaginative conviction (Leuthold, 1998). Human agency is at work on multiple levels as historic, symbolic and corporeal senses. More specifically, the Trinidad Carnival, much like the Barranquillan Carnival, reinvents the dominant language with African and indigenous traditions to recreate communal identities. The Caribbean word belé taken from the French word “bel air” was changed and identified with women’s dances, where women were and continue to be active social agents in the Canboulay performances during Trinidadian festivals (Riggio, 2004). The representation of African dance and song, call and response lyrics are elements that are rooted in the linguistic, symbolic and time space interpretation of indigenous resistance, although the representation of feminisms as those who have retained cultures remains theoretically unsubstantiated as women’s feminist practices.

## Folkdance on a Stage of Resistance

Folk dance is a terrain where people contest the unequal distribution of monetary awards that have been appropriated by the government and handed to carnival enterprises. The Global and local tensions are witnessed through the stage of the entrepreneurial establishments. This adds another dimension of resistance to the context of festival is a central space because of its complex political economy, the mass media, the exotic as hyper commercialized and the cultural politics of gender as a vehicle for attraction and entertainment. The spatial organization between media and street staging has become more divisive; first, because of the separation between social strata and secondly because of the distancing between the passive male onlooker and the indifferent performer. As such, carnival enterprises continue to usurp and regulate the production of planned spontaneity. Now executive producers receive a substantive amount of funds from governmental agencies as a form of patrimonial lineage where official naming puts regions on the national landscape. Performances, nonetheless, function under limited competitions and economic rewards.

The socio-economic formations in third worlds are symbolically represented through dance as folk, classic, authentic and traditional. As dance is being sold, the attitude, behaviors and tensions of who takes ownership of dances and how they are negotiated is not typically a bottom up resistance. Those in control of economic gains use imagery and marketing that exploits, objectifies ethnic identities as they are projected into the global limelight. Keeping up with modern trends, while not compromising essential historical elements of ancestral knowledge, is as a constant process of negotiation (Canclini, 2002; Wade, 2000) created and recreated against



overarching forces of nationalist cultural politics who appropriate working class culture as one of the main resources for projecting a hegemonic state.

Festive enterprises that take on the demands of globalization extend into the educational institutions that must also document and substantiate culture through the production of scholarly work. Both cooperate under the same umbrella that according to Richard Schechner (Riggio, 2004), included

the active involvement of government, businesses, and educational institutions who want to understand, broadcast, exploit, and sell [Trinidad] Carnival on the world markets-including the scholarship market. That is, many persons both inside of and beyond Trinidad want carnival to be “attractive,” both as entertainment and as a focus for serious scholarly work . . . its treatment as a cultural resource to be exploited as you would any other marketable resource-is part of the postmodern phenomenon of intellectual property, which assigns an economic value to the creation, ownership, and buying and selling of information. (p. 9)

My own implication and awareness of this project as being potentially exploitative, merits attention especially because of the irony of becoming the feared authority that I attempt to deconstruct. Whether or not scholarly work on carnival is set up to be contriving is not the problem because what fuels the desire to know about carnival is the difference between planned occurrences and assertions of child-like spontaneity. The patriarchal definitions of folklore involve the perception of spontaneity as the unknown variable aside from whiteness that scholars search in the world of the mundane. According to Krishnamurti (1992), spontaneity involves an almost unattainable and uncanny resistance as part of the human condition. Spontaneity implies “you have never been conditioned, you are not reacting, you are not being influenced; that means you are really a free human being, without anger, hatred without having a purpose in view” (p.73). So to truly attain a freedom that comes from the spontaneous

utopia of folkdance implies a higher order of knowledge through simplicity, through the innocent eyes of a new born child or as a new world order. Furthermore, in reference to the point of attraction, folkdance becomes the unattainable variable that momentarily disseminates part of a missing piece to the world of capitalist consumption. Searching for a world of play balances conformity and by default also legitimizes the need to display the festive as a topic of investigation. Moreover, the challenge of advancing folkdance to become a site of resistance and a site of investigation stems from a need to deconstruct social inequality that Morton-Robinson (2005) asserted “is the development of a white person’s identity [that] requires they be defined against other ‘less than human’ beings whose presence enables and reinforces their superiority” (p. 76). At present, the knower and learner must consciously balance the process of folkdance as a partice for social consciousness and transformation (Freire, 1970) by seeking out moments where peaceful interacton may occur instead of becoming the same abusive authority.

Under what conditions do women react and respond to the information or knowledge that is imparted as a cultural resource? A social consciousness unpacks the multiple roles of selling a product of fun, excitement and joy as well as constructing a legitimate stage where women express culture as a basic aspect of human experience and the personal as a lived reality. My aim is to minimize the distancing of folkdance as a form of amusement and entertainment for those in power. In doing so, festive cultures driven by ethnic identities are also projected onto a restaged past leading to the liminal (Turner, 1988) spaces of interpretation.

### *Restaging the Past*

The dance stage is a context that embodies limitless forms of complex interpretations of historical significance for underrepresented people. Jane Desmond (1998) emphasized that visual and verbal discursive texts including spoken word and critical work on body movement does not sufficiently question the art of dance as a sight of resistance because North American culture does not focus on movements, symbols, interpretations and actions as text. This calls for a movement based pedagogy that examines social production of identity through specific cases in dance that are both historic and contemporary. Giroux (2006) suggested that recognizing universal pretenses is not enough for a critical praxis. "Instead, counter-memory attempts to recover communities of memory and narratives of struggle that provide a sense of location, place and identity to various dominant and subordinate groups" (p .58). Folkdance is a custom, a counter memory and histories that thrive more in some geographic locations than others, especially in geographic locations that represent ethnic mixtures. The challenge in folkdance, as Helen Thomas (1995) speculated, is that while modernism and civil reasoning increase, dancing diminishes due to the fact that it is marginalized three fold as an intangible art form, body centered, and a feminine expression. A synthesis between the impact of counter memory, nostalgia and civil reasoning, potentially strengthens the transformational qualities of an embodied pedagogy. In addition to recovering histories/myths/traditions, the moral and ethical relations within the texts and within the lived realities of women deconstructs gendered, naturalized, or romanticized notions by combining the past-like presence of staged interpretations.

While staged dance firmly holds onto traditional gender conventions that can be problematic as a context to reify machismo, women are engaging as leaders and thinkers who respond to the inequality of gender relations. Liane Loots (2005) used Foucault's ideology of power dynamics in determining the struggle of body language in dance, particularly in relation to women and South African dance. She questioned partnering conventions, the gaze, spectator/performer relationships and the gendered costuming. She studied European ballet of South Africa and proposed that colonized bodies need to overcome gendered construction through movement education. Reclaiming the contribution of women in order to address these divisions between colonizer/colonized or observer/performer, projects a context that is always political and always engaged in a power dynamic.

In the case of modern U.S. theatrical performances, a comparative analysis with other cultures and time periods can be useful in determining a critical folkdance pedagogy. Susan Manning (2004) studied the trajectory of Black spirituals from 1928-1944. The method of comparison between Black American spirituals and Bahamian dances were measured in part through a lens of whitened aesthetic distancing, that separates the staged and unrehearsed, the controlled bodies and loose bodies and between geographic of U.S and Caribbean culture. As one media critic noted "there is not such a favorable tale to be told of the Bahamian dances. Such formless cavorting has rarely graced a concert program"<sup>12</sup> (p. 43). What is implied and assumed with perceptions of unrehearsed spontaneity, misconstrues the meanings that contain

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<sup>12</sup> This quote was taken from Walter Terry, "To the Negro Dance," New York Herald Tribune, 28 January 1940, section 6, 10.

alternative ways of life that are expressed as identities of Caribbean cultures. How are Carnival (street) dances and theatrical staged dances interrelated as to establish a cultural politics that questions the limits of the distanced gaze of male dominated observations? By seeking out the historical and contemporary similarities that represent folkdance, the study of movement influenced by the environment, embodies social truths that are translated and internalized as a critical practice.

The purpose, intentions, and outcomes of dance practices respond to ethnic contributions that address the embodied motivations that go unvoiced during historical moments. For example, in the United States traditional folkdance has been used as a means of blatantly distinguishing between cultures. During the turbulent periods between moving out from the Jim Crow laws and into the period of civil rights movements, minstrels and black spirituals projected racial difference that served to dehumanize blackness as a representation of entertainment for whites. But reinventing the superficial dominant history through the voice of the people who perform would be a counter memory that reflects the motivations, the environment and the attitudes of how this translates as part of a civil rights movement. Staging the past as a civil rights movement (performance) reacts to the oppression by taking to the stage an imagined utopia, a nostalgic past that requires, at present and during those time periods, a safety net. Using the stage as an organized space and as a physically distant space can represent minority cultures as central actors. Having a central space on stage is relevant for the psycho-socio integration of those whose phenotype is rejected by a whitened typecasting of American plays. Staging the past with folklore through Alvin Ailey's 1961 "*revelations*" conveys memoirs about blues, spirituals, gospel music, and ragtime

music that serve as a folk ethnography that remembers and translates the identity of blackness as an essential piece of solidarity in the United States. Critical folkdance pedagogy revisits the absence of folkdance and interrogates the policies and rights of indigenous representation as exemplified in Jaqueline Shea Murphy's (2007) work *The People Have not Stopped Dancing*. Native American staged dance engages in healing and transformation despite colonial enforcement of anti-dance laws. The purpose of critical indigenous staged dances in the U.S. stresses the significance of blatant U.S. policies as native dancing was banned and sanctioned. Locating its survival through interpretive representations advocates moral codes engrained into indigenous belief systems. Here, the dances of Native Americans are engaged with healing and transformation that acknowledge a respect for tradition, dance as a respect for spirituality and also a space to assert cultural politics. Staged performances are not productions but processes that tell stories about familial and tribal connections. Jacqueline Murphy, as a dance researcher, learns most by talking to locals in order to learn that dance is connected to historical practices, colonial resistances and alternative concepts of dance as a sacred practice. DeFranz (2004) aligns the power of modern dance performance, in this case, hip hop, as a representation of black power. The combination of both music and dance is a sacred responsibility that involves a moral standing of honesty, purity, and eloquence as a language of bodies in motion. The technical also has the possibility of transforming into the metaphysical, and vice versa (Hamera, 2007).

Acknowledging the survival of folkdance is not enough within the study of critical folkdance pedagogy. The combination of revolutionary festivities and the staged

past involves a consciousness of movement that sets yet another stage as a contemporary space of social integration, one that interjects the personal and political dialogue of history and agency into the classroom stage.

### *Restaging Folkdance in Education*

Education, both theoretically and practically specifies the broader ideology of dominant society. This is particularly important, given the fact that institutionalized structures and hidden school curriculums monitor, control and construct race, class and gendered roles (Giroux, 2001, 2003; Martin, 2003; McLaren, 1993; McRobbie, 2001; Stromquist, 2000). A contextualized pedagogy of folkdance insists on exploring how the broader knowledge of our society can be used within the space of classrooms in order to apply an embodied practice. Our moving bodies always tell a story of how we interact with the broader influences of dominant histories, economies and controlled environments. Internalizing a personal connection as a dialectic that is global in scope involves a consciousness of praxis and folkdance as an emancipatory project.

Folkdance, as a multidimensional outlet, may lessen the gap of 'othering' that produces conflict and violence in the first place. The theoretical applications of critical pedagogy reread folkdance as a tool to explore alternative histories and how to practice folkdance as a vehicle toward emancipation. As Peter McLaren asserted

only in the name of general rights of society can any knowledge claim to be emancipatory. Only if such knowledge abolishes bourgeois civil society can it lay claim to serve the working class. Knowledge that does not go beyond contemplating the world and observing it objectively without transcending given social conditions merely affirms what already exists. Revolutionary critical knowledge combines theory and practice and contributes to the transformation of existing social relations in the interest of the emancipation from the rule of capital. (p. 197)

Being keen to specifically recognize the existing social relations and creatively implement them throughout everyday practices is crucial. Claiming rights as part of an indigenous knowledge system, what it means to be indigenous, how and why dance has been retained in other societies is not sufficient, according to Peter McLaren (1993). Moving beyond what already exists involves an emotive response to difference and assumes that the rule of capital is deep rooted construction of knowledge that permeates relationships within and outside of our classrooms. This includes a natural response to move our bodies in order to recondition restricted behaviors that serve to comply with the hegemonic rule of race, class and gender norms. However, replacing physical inhibition with another discourse requires an awareness of the potential responses and implications of having to deal with authorities. Patty Bowman (2006) advocated for Folk Arts in education in order to redefine community by placing folklorists and students at the center of the curriculum. These pedagogies share the same theories as “situated learning, reflective practice, critical pedagogy, multicultural education, and service learning, all of which share elements of our discipline: use of content relevant to students” (p. 74). To balance the common interpretation of folkdance as a universal language, educators must also consider the many international differences among societies as a cultural platform for indigenous knowledge (Bolwell, 1998; Buelvas, 1993; Morales, 1983), as well as consider folkdance as improvisational and inclusive (Lomas, 1998). By applying movement into our classrooms we are unlearning the rituals of Western education, the community, and the conditioned self (Darder, 2007). Shifting the ways we have been socialized to perceive dance as a decorative art form, one that mainly serves as temporary entertainment for festive performances and



commercial capital, requires an understanding of grass roots knowledge that has been neglected in many ways in our western traditions.

The function of play, essential for physical and psychological formation in humans, has been systematically denied in the social fabric of many U.S. institutions, in exchange for work and productivity. If we can specifically locate examples that complicate the various dimensions of how folkdance as an educational practice is linked to street (Carnival) cultures, staged cultures and the spaces that limits or free individuals in society, learning also begins within these specific spaces. Henry Giroux (2003) clearly stated the relationship of schools as a prime location for developing a critical pedagogy.

The concept of culture in this view exists in particular relationship to the material base of society. The explanatory value of such a relationship is to be found in making problematic the specific content of a culture, its relationship to dominant and subordinate groups, as well as the socio-historical genesis of the ethos and practices of legitimating cultures and their role in constituting relations of domination and resistance. For example, by pointing to schools as cultural sites that embody conflicting political values, histories, and practices, it becomes possible to investigate how schools can be analyzed as an expression of a wider organization of society. (p. 52)

In essence, cross examining street culture, staged culture and school culture begins in geographic locations that represent subordinate groups, as in the case of women in the Atlantic coast region. The socio historical genesis involves ethnic, ethical and ethereal provisions to legitimize women's practices especially concerning the personal motivations of practicing folkdance within and outside of public and private classrooms. Researching women's identities and folkdance practices that integrate physical, mental and transformational forms of knowledge through an embodied

pedagogy is an alternative to integrate ourselves out from the individual isolation and into a sense of community. As Warren (2005) suggested,

Recognizing that identity and self are constituted through embodied interaction, performance pedagogy makes bodies productively present-forcing all bodies to coexist in a reflexive, pedagogical encounter. Rather than allowing dualism to continue forcing the body to the background, educators who value and use performative practice search for ways of making and learning more visceral , more impassioned, more fully alive. (p. 101)

Where institutions tend to rid students from being physical and democratic individuals, performing culture to understand history, class and race from alternative viewpoints can balance the demand we have for overdriven mental focus. The question is how can we incorporate this one concept into the problems we are facing in education?

Some researchers (Jalongo, 1997) have been able to study the benefits for children and young women. The seven intelligences of children thrive and dance has a positive effect on body image for women because it entails a collaborative group effort rather than an individual focus. Furthermore, Tina Kazan (2005) emphasized that teachers must engage how bodies are read and understood in order to break through the limitations of traditional gender conventions. She stated

we do not have the power to monitor whether and how bodies are made intelligible in our culture. But we do have the power to monitor whether and how bodies are read and responded to in our classrooms and whether students are as active, vocal and mobile as the teacher. (p. 394)

The content of what we teach is a reflection of our attitude in society. John Dewey posed the question “How shall the young be acquainted with the past in such a way that the acquaintance is a potent agent in appreciation of living the present?” (Dewey, 1963, p. 23). This is not exclusively for the young anymore but for anyone. The pressing

question is how our experiences are an essential part of our education, these experiences have focused more on the formation of the mind which is absolutely essential but it has excluded the body's purpose in relation to educational establishments. As dance practices have been historically banished from these systems, an interrogation of this dismissal opens the doors to include the uses of folkdance as a means to social change.

### Autoethnography: "Cumbaya" Finds Peace in Class

*March 2008*

*In a conference room, round table, interviewing for a full time assistant professor position at Prairie State College.*

Hiring committee Prairie State: How have you dealt with conflict in your classroom and with your students?

Me: *(Pausing for a moment, I was compelled to be completely honest despite the awkward response)* We danced.

Hiring committee: *(puzzled)* Really? What do you mean? Could you please explain.

*August 2006*

After having problems with an older Spanish teacher who had taught Spanish for more than 20 years and an older adult learner from a small local town, I was not welcome to teach. The accusations bordered on slander and were spread throughout the college to administrators, to my students and then to me. I am still unsure of the problem, perhaps generational differences, ethnic differences, and different perceptions of what it means to teach. Decades of educational traditions produce teachers who imitate and epitomize the authoritarian Catholic classroom, I was the intruder. I felt, saw, and heard the hatred towards me, in and out of the classroom. Although I am a

faithful native to this town, to this state, I have quietly grown into my well deserved space here. A shift or change into being part of the community does not come about naturally, just because I am an entitled young Hispanic teacher . My action required and continues to require a constant affirmation to remind me of my purpose that gets buried under the always operating oppressive regime of patriarchy. My affirmation is negative and goes like this “authority has hurt me and scared me but I am most afraid of becoming such an authority.”

I came into class shaking that day, doubting myself, but faithful in my lesson plan. The hurtful name calling was just a by product of our oppression as women, competitive lifestyles, bearers of a racist, sexist and ethnocentric society. I found an academic space where I could embody and take refuge in my other culture, one that allows me to embrace my Colombian self with a pedagogical army of social and educational theorists, knowing that I am one in a long army of educational activists fully vested in facing my fears of patriarchy is part of that definition that is finally surfacing today, into a consciously driven state of asserting my own ground, roots, planted and blooming roots from way back. This lived reality requires acknowledging the authority to speak and to subvert it into a hopeful pedagogy.

We worked through a grammar lesson, but more importantly the philosophy carried a cultural component that made feet tap, shoulders move, brains tick and faces smile. Only one answer could change the oppression I had been feeling my first semester, the solution was substantial, ethical, and moral because of the intended respect without compromising my integrity. We can choose the same drudging war tactics for social combat or the dance that lives long after we are gone. Celia Cruz’s “La

Vida es un Carnival” (Life is a carnival) rhythms give me hope and inspiration. A classroom practice of critical folkdance pedagogy seemed oddly liminal and foreign because my theories of action- based practice using dance, music and our bodies all of a sudden became a practical possibility to dissolve tension.

Ay, there's no need to cry,  
because life is a carnival,  
It's more beautiful to live singing.  
Oh, Ay, there's no need to cry,  
For life is a carnival  
And your pains can be alleviated through song.  
For those that complain forever,  
For those that only criticize,  
For those that use weapons,  
For those that pollute us,  
For those that make war,  
For those that live in sin,  
For those that mistreat us,  
For those that make us sick  
Ay, there's no need to cry,  
because life is a carnival,  
It's more beautiful to live singing.  
Oh, Ay, there's no need to cry

For one moment, we managed to find a common ground as human beings. She smiled and bobbed her head to the music. She knew the liminal messages of the drum beats of human caring were directed at her. A consciousness that came out of a creative philosophy that I learned years ago as laughter during the water-pots and pans water balloon bonanza fight, is a way to find joy. They all swayed and sang along to the catchy tune admitting it was stuck in their heads, whistling it at work and at home. The next day we hesitantly formed our CUMBAYA circle (cousin to the cumbia maybe?) but now knowing the lyrics and a familiar tune, one step lead to the next one, as we put our dancing bodies into action by dancing together.

In retrospect, this conflict could be the growing pains of new generations meeting the seasoned ones; those who have fought long and hard at getting women to embrace feminisms in a “man’s world” in a tone of individual personal histories. Though we are all unique in the path we have taken, our intentions are of the greater good and have not meant to be competitive, individualistic or selfish at the expense of others. Women who are courageous enough to go back to school or women who have brushed off the fear of leaving our private homes to compete in the dominant public eye are triumphs not to be forgotten. They offered me the position. A new youth is coming into education that questions predecessors who have opened doors as we negotiate these choices by questioning the logic that has made education a breeding ground for stagnancy beginning in our body. We have an obligation and responsibility to question and change old methods as we find new ways to suture the ruptures that cannot be mended with words. This is the potential of critical folkdance pedagogy.

### Conclusion

Clearly, critical folkdance pedagogy has no limits to its application much like the festive attitudes during carnival. It is not a measurement of technique but a way to loosen the grip of restrictions. Nor is it about a staged performance but deconstructing those spaces that represent our counter memories. The definition of beauty as a carnival attraction takes risks under the gaze of mass culture and exploitation in order to stage what seems impossible and idealistic like making the separate whole again by remembering that Cumbaya, Cumbia, NKumba, Cumbancha, derive from African and Native ancestries whose purpose is to impart acts of joy.

## CHAPTER 5

### CRITICAL FOLKFEMINIST METHODOLOGY

According to Margaret Mills (1994), a methodology of feminist folklorists has been almost found for some time now. It is not hiding, it is alive and thriving in meaningful ways, at times explicit, implicit, normalized and fleeting; though always remembered in such a way that permits change and fluid spontaneity reflected as a process of learning. Dance has always been a part of grass roots experience and knowledge, hence, indigenous knowledge, where Native and African histories and experiences continue to be part of an identity of performed resistance. Within the scope of critical folkfeminism, this research project focuses on folkdancing practices in the Atlantic coast region of Colombia and how women enact, perceive and transmit dancing as pedagogy among patriarchal constraints. But how can we restage Carnival or festive driven societies by including feminist voices of folk song and dance? The reading and writing tools of research must include an ideological fusion between qualitative and interpretative analysis among a tradition of critical third world feminisms. A variety of resources and perspectives layers the complications of research.

By exploring the theoretical and experiential processes of conducting research, I explain how traditional qualitative inquiry and interpretive methodologies inform the kind of theory and practice that relates to developing, a somewhat freestyle of pulling together a folkfeminist methodology that reflects and parallels the nature of folklore as people's interpretation of culture. As such, interviews, participatory-observation, autoethnography, symbolic interpretive performance of histories and textual analysis

allows a triangulation of resources. Cross referencing multiple voices can serve to contrast the various in moral and ethical positions of research.

Participatory dimensions combine an interpretive/qualitative approach to understanding the context of women's lives and folkdancing culture. It engages the interpretation of memory, reflection, and personal writings during and after the research process. Interpretive interactive methods compliment the processes of overt participation because it allows an alternative perspective to the formal processes of gathering data. Qualitative participation-observation provides the grounds of analysis and interpretive methodology and provides a space to draw conclusions and form arguments based on the moral and ethical implications of research as a political space to advance a more just and democratic society. I am aware of the uneven relations of representation, the messiness of their constructions; but the struggle of decolonizing the structural walls, including my own participation, writes within and out of a space for social consciousness.

The performative value producing indigenous or near native knowledge ignites an authenticity of near native/indigenous research practices that express efforts in decolonizing our own thought processes of marginality, in regions of political, social, economic and gender oppression (Henderson, 2000; Leuthold, 1998; Smith, L., 1999). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) provided an ideological trajectory of how indigenous ethnographic research has been used and how it is moving forward as a way to be involved in decolonization efforts. This is done by writing ourselves into research as a way of validating our integrity and proving our survival for the future, without forgetting that the master's folkloric metaphors also idealize the past.



Third world knowledge through folkfeminist methodology represents individualized subjectivities where various forms of folkdance as a social, economic and symbolic stage, brings to light the meanings of folklore that are performed by individual women in the popular class system. Moreover, Folkfeminism stems from third world positions but also connotes folk, as a familiar position that is part of indigenous culture, restaging indigenous as adding on to a U.S. Latina feminist dialogue of the *New Mestiza* (Anzaldúa, 2002). Because research is so often focused on what kinds of existing knowledge have been passed on within mainstream contexts, women and groups, folkfeminist theories represent an intersubjective interaction between folk practitioners, a search for understanding multiple meanings, and the hierarchical structures that reproduce patriarchal carnival culture.

Advancing folkfeminist concepts in the context of folkdance, then, must be developed through a critical textual analysis of interpretive/qualitative methodologies that engage indigenous or near native experiences as part of the decolonization process of third world constructs. Thus, as a folkfeminist, laying out the problems that I encounter as a researcher within the parameters of qualitative and interpretive interaction which can be used to compare and contrast the multiple subjective definitions of the problem of patriarchal traditions held by educators of dance since research is already value laden with personal hopes and desires within the context in which we live (Flyvberg, 2001; Howe, 1998; Popkewitz, 1998). The underlying question or variable within the tradition of qualitative inquiry is to define how we perceive the natural world around us.

The problem therein lies in balancing how to subjectively unfold the interpretation of our research, as we break out of positivist norms within the social sciences. Qualitative research compliments interpretive research because it is a comparative gauge of documented primary sources and secondary sources like interviews, video footage, and participant observations that provide a cross analysis of information. The formality of conducting research protects the subjects, but it also hides the informal pedagogies of what is learned before, during, and ethnographic experiences. Traditional folklore research (Radner & Lanser, 1993) does not entirely emphasize the researchers' candid involvement and intentions; hence it is not founded in a radical/political statement of purpose.

Dwight Conquergood (2006) asserted that an ethnographer, coming from a space of critical cultural politics must expose the hardships of the researcher's body in corssing borders, barriers, and the risks and privileges of living on the edge of how we respond to the moments of learning from those with whom we choose to speak. The text, then, becomes an example of performative politics based on the possibilities of human equality (Denzin, 2006). Furthermore, women's creative practices are performative when, as Laura Lengel (2004) asserted "dance, music, women's histories, and the unique ways women communicate interpersonally are all strengths grounding women's creative practice and the intercultural exchange that results from the performative act" (p. 278).

For example, the authenticity and validity to this research stems out of the risks and privileges of travel laced with an agenda of clues with a wavering "play it by ear" agenda within the limitations of being a woman with an entré or blending in due to my

Colombian background and appearance. I had to let go of the rigidity of an agenda, trust in the references of people's experience and my own fumbling around in a society whose time and space are used differently than in the midwest.

Interpretive studies allow the researcher to comment on the impact of relationships and cultures using intertextual visual, corporeal and textual analysis performances. This methodology, generally, highlights what is required to overcome the risks and challenges of leaving one's comfort zone, for example, by exposing the vulnerable side of feminist research. Kenneth Howe (1998) reminded us not to embrace a project as being overconfident and paternalistic. Furthermore, the interpretive turn allows us to have multiple perspectives where

we live our lives in other worlds of finite provinces of meaning, in Shultz's words (Schwandt, 2001) we "bestow the accent of reality." These include the world of dreams, art, religion, the play world of the child, the world of scientific contemplation, and the world of the insane. (p. 167)

On the other hand, a disinterested or bracketed off scientific observer may not forcefully expose the passion, fears, courage, determination and perseverance to reclaim indigenous or near native knowledge, as we grapple with alternative outlets and attitudes in writing research that contests dominant paradigms (Lal, 1999; Lather, 1986; Frankenburg & Mani, 1996; Solorzano, 2001; Villenas, 1996). Interpretive methodology acknowledges that researchers strive to make moral and ethical choices throughout the processes that contest gender, race and class oppression. For example, as a near native researcher, I seek to focus on the experiential shifts and difficulties of establishing relationships as part of the research. The contribution of indigenous research as a decolonization process and my own response to not romanticize or

idealize the past can help to expose the pitfalls of conducting research. Research as a decolonizing process, demonstrates the struggles between my own assumptions and how my concepts change as I integrate, collaborate and separate myself with the men and women that I meet. Through autoethnographic writing, these contradictions between self and other are included sporadically, using poems, and short journals or fieldnotes that reveal the scenery, dialogue, emotion, and spirituality in relation to the public and private spaces central to this research.

Finally, despite the objectification and exoticization of women's dances from the male gaze, I seek to demonstrate through my study how some performative aspects of folkdancing in Barranquilla are actually feminist acts of resistance and self-determination. Performance theories call for partial looking and must recall the missing voices and acknowledge that it is through action-based research that serves as a radical revolutionary praxis (Denzin, 2006, p. 330). I seek to use a folkfeminist lens to interpret how women perform, retain and change folkdancing as a representation of their successes and constraints within their Atlantic Coast folkloric/carnival society.

As a combination of interpretive and qualitative methodologies, a folkfeminist approach examines the meaning of folkdance through movement performance within moments of space and time. Performance and performative studies, more specifically through critical folkdance pedagogy, problematize everyday processes as seen within the dramaturgical stage of life (Bakhtin, 1984; Geertz, 1973; Goffman, 1959; Turner, 1988), but there still needs to be a folkfeminist analysis and the role of education toward restaging the past (carnival practices) as a political and educational tool, which also resists the politics of colonialism, racial oppression and class differences.

The native intellectual who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realize that the truths of a nation are in the first place its realities. He must go on until he has found the seething pot out of which the learning of the future will emerge. (Fanon, 1963, p. 132)

Folkdance traditions have been used to recreate nostalgic and romanticized notions of indigenously groups or primitive third-world cultures, the politics of critical folkdance pedagogy seeks to unveil moments where women have been both the protagonists in folkdance, both perpetuating their own oppression and agents of their own liberation. Where critical folkdance pedagogy is a politics of dance, critical folkfeminist methodology combines the practice of research and writing as to both celebrate women's contribution to societies and problematize the analysis as it intersects with intellectual, physical and spiritual dance practices.

#### Combining Tradition: Participatory Dimensions

Critical folkfeminist methodology is grounded in participatory dimensions, which combine an interpretive/qualitative approach to make sense of women's lives and folkdancing as culture. It engages the interpretation of memory, reflection, and personal writings that emerge during and after the research process. Interpretive interactive methods compliment the processes of overt participation because it engenders an alternative perspective to that of formal processes of data gathering. Qualitative participation-observation provides the grounds of analysis and interpretive methodology provides a space to draw conclusions and form arguments based on the moral and ethical implications of research as a political space in which to advance a more just and democratic society. This is carried out by keeping in mind the uneven relations of

representation, the messiness of its construction, the struggle of decolonizing the structural walls of my own work, and the responsibility inherent in taking a critical stance for social change.

For social change to take place, concepts like to be folklorized in the sense of becoming trivial, overlooked, not taken seriously, irrelevant, or discounted through jokes, humor, fun, and games can be revisited as a serious topic of research and why these adjectives are synonyms to also being colonized. According to Margaret Mills (1994):

The feminist critique must integrate other elements besides gender such as class, historical period, community, age, occupation and especially race and ethnicity in perceiving the partial visions and hegemonic tendencies of such terms as “folk” and “folklore” not to mention ideas implicit or otherwise about who can be folklorist, a knower on our intellectual map, so to deny full status as knowers to the female gender and to non-Europeans. The term feminist folklorist has been under the category of “almost found” for way too long. (p. 184)

In addition to using primary sources such as interviews, video footage, observation notes through qualitative methods in participatory research, folkfeminist researchers must integrate the self into the narrative and admit the faults, deceptions, and gaps of our observations. The emancipation of anyone, including the researcher is polemic and difficult to project, quantify or prove. The problems and polemic of being a critical researcher assumes that I have a special or superior knowledge that I must continually question because of how I am socialized to work within and against the White male dominated backdrop of what it means to conduct legitimate or valid research (Morton-Robinson, 2005). The privileged position to create and represent others is a psychological, moral, and ethical conflict but merits taking chances because it exposes and slowly sheds the uncertainties of research. Precision and accuracy of the

construction of knowledge depends on the reader's decision as yet another process of contact with content of research data. Interpersonal exchanges and making meaning from interviews are compromised by the time that is allowed by women, translating the interviews and the cultural distancing or building trust certainly shapes how I layout the interviews. For example, very little has been omitted from the interview process because of the valuable ideas and experiences that are represented. Reflexivity in writing is an important aspect to research, as Norm Denzin (2006) argued "These narratives must always be directed back to the structures that shape and produce the violence in question," (p. 334); thus, questioning our intentions and biases are essential for producing knowledge. In going to Colombia as a near native researcher for 1 year, there can never be a tautological way of preparing, there are no clear guidelines or objectivity, except for an understanding that the research should reflect a well thought out structured agenda that demonstrates my ability to apply concepts and then being flexible enough to question those structures.

Autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 1999; Richardson, 2002) is an essential element for participatory research in that it exposes the fears and anxieties about producing a representation of one's own culture, the failures, false expectations, and epiphanies which might transpire during the writing/research interpretive experience. It lays out the personal motives, experiences and memories where I can layer the counter memory, practice and theory as one more example of how this project is also a way of life integrated into my practice as being an educator. Autoethnography projects how this is relevant to my everyday and how I have been shaped by folkdance, how I use it in the classroom, the little "happen chance" stories, poems, and journals that solidify the

context. An awareness of self constantly negotiates perspectives and is careful not to reify the same patriarchal attitude of overbearing authority and control. The fear of regenerating this same type of authority is also part of a check and balance by being an explicit voice writing autoethnography instead of hiding through the guise of an absent author. The struggle of “arguments over feelings, theories over stories, abstractions over concrete events, sophisticated jargon over accessible prose. Why should we be ashamed if our work has therapeutic or personal value?” (Ellis & Bochner, 2002, p. 746), is a method of triangulation which furthers the authenticity and relevancy of the topic at hand.

### Textual Analysis in Folkfeminism

Textual analysis of primary, secondary, autoethnographic experiences are resources highlight oppositional stances in order to break the language of male supremacy by applying reflexive and critical methodological research practices (Anzaldúa, 2002; Baxter, 2003; Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004; Lourde, 1978; Mohanty, 2004; Sandoval, 2000). Textual analysis in folkfeminist studies pays attention to the anonymous voices or observed silences in written texts. In other words, the body, with its oral and physical expressions, provides an oppositional yet collective standpoint, compared to simply written discourses. Videotaped productions, cassette recordings, and interviews are also primary resources that can provide a means for cross-referencing information. For example, lyrics of *cumbia*, *mapale*, or *tambora*, accompanied by public performances, women’s interpretation of their own work, and historical academic references provides a platform for cross-referencing participatory



meanings that reflect the dynamics of retentions and changes in folklore social meanings. Furthermore, a literary analysis of the ethnomusicology of lyrics, song and dance from a critical feminist perspective is incorporated into constructing meaning from resources such as newspaper clippings, and old records that provide a sequence of the history of folksong/dance interpretation.

Within folkfeminist methodology, the body as a politics of location can deconstruct traditional forms of patriarchal oppression, by scoping the temporal spaces where women express their individual stories of liberation (Doann, 1988; McRobbie, 2001; Probyn, 1993). The visual aspects of performance discourse unbind the patriarchal hierarchies of culture, by unmarking oppressive representations of class, gender and racial segregation (Kaplan, 1997; Penley, 1988; Rose, 2001; Sandoval, 1984). This allows for a more diverse interpretation of women from underrepresented cultures that seek to redefine the meaning of indigenous knowledge.

In addition, Joan Newlon Radner and Susan S. Lanser (1993) provided a checklist for analyzing folkloric concepts through a feminist lens. Textual analysis can be critiqued through appropriation, juxtaposition, distraction, indirection, trivialization, and/or incompetence. In brief, how does a culture determine if women are 'competent or incompetent' of performing certain normative duties? Is the performance considered appropriate or inappropriate within these constructs? Is the performance a distraction? Does it drown out and draw attention away from subversive feminist symbols? An indirect text or performance creates ambiguity of forbidden social behaviors, slants them to cover up underlying political intentions. Trivial folklore performance is a type of knowledge or symbol that is considered irrelevant by the dominant culture,

oftentimes discounted and overlooked. These are suggestions to critically understanding how culture is at work within various discursive texts as well as in the lives of women.

Folkfeminism, then, aims to be legitimate, but not concerned with finding “true” knowledge. Rather, it is constructed provisionally, temporarily associated with particular ever-changing moments of life where both the politically charged through will power and progressive acts, depending on the motivations and interpretation of the researcher and participants through writing, participatory observation and textual analysis. In addition, writing as praxis exposes incongruency. For example, even the meaning of what is expected during an interview and how this effects collaboration within their limits of public and private life, taped dance performances, overt participant-observations as a dancing researcher, and written forms of data are essential pieces that carry equal political weight.

#### Near Native Indigenous Ethnography (Marginality)

The contradictions and tensions of being marginal as a first world, near native feminist performer/researcher acknowledge differences in relations of power with “others.” If the other reflected through writing is not a bad word anymore, than this opens up possibilities to create knowledge, concerns and emotions that go along with the construction of knowledge. Moreover, being a woman researcher in a foreign country is a complicated layer of oppression and decolonization (Visweswaran, 1994). Attempts to be a legitimate researcher in a society where men are traditionally folklorists and theorists can be tiresome, self destructive and anti-feminist is truly a challenging process. Recognizing and overcoming a fear of dominant ideology

established in academic traditions can potentially stifle or altogether defeat the completion of one's work. In response, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) provided intellectual ammunition through the use of Black Feminist thought to break this dilemma.

The shadow obscuring this complex Black women's intellectual tradition is neither accidental nor benign. Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization. (p. 3)

The performative value of these words ignites the authenticity of near native/indigenous research practices that express efforts in decolonizing our own thought processes of marginality in regions of political, social, economic and gender oppression (Leuthold, 1998; Smith, 1999). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) critiqued how indigenous ethnographic research has been used and how it is moving forward as a way to be involved in decolonizing efforts by writing ourselves into the research. She viewed this as a way of validating our integrity and assuring our survival for the future, without forgetting the master's folkloric metaphors, which violently idealize the past.

First it was used as a form of articulating what it meant to be dehumanized by colonization: and, second for organizing 'national consciousness in the struggles for decolonization. The belief of an authentic self is framed within humanism but has been policed by the colonized world in ways which invoke simultaneous meanings; it does appeal to an idealized past when there was no colonizer, to our strengths in surviving thus far, to our language as an uninterrupted link to our histories, to the ownership of our lands, to our abilities to create, control our own life and death, to a sense of balance among ourselves, and with the environment. (p. 73)

Sensitive relationships are created within these contexts which also include relations that are built on symbolic ties that are felt through dialogic interaction. Uma Narayan (1997) moved toward redefining what is meant by tradition and how these rituals play a part in establishing oppressive roles. She stands for a need to include the

everyday practice of liberation among oppression and how women subvert patriarchy for survival and self worth. Kamala Visweswaran (1994) also explored the fictional, biographical and folkloric construction of ethnography in order to construct other possible worlds. At times being in multiple conscious positions becomes a question of not being overwhelmed, so as to not betray or fail either one of our cultures at any given moment. Part of voicing these problematic circumstances within researcher reflexivity and subjectivity becomes the contradiction. We examine research practices within ourselves, how we relate to our participants and how we recreate our homes away from home.

Furthermore, the conflict of being near native is a performance of observing myself as I observe others, living among and at times hovering over my thoughts and actions. There is no doubt that the escape mechanism of nearness stands on the fence of observation with the option of going towards the safest shores. As one teeters between critical nostalgia/romanticism and feminist ethnography, it is fair to accept the moments of weakness where the cultural current seems to pull in different directions. The checks and balances used to check our biases are multifaceted , perhaps a metaphoric carousel wheel that comes and goes during 4 days of carnival celebrations, juxtaposed with the concept of carnival as a way of life. Navigating through these vastly different cultural positions can marginalize the folkfeminist researcher because of the uncertainty of our own positions and the anticipation that this creates, when there is a need to perform nearness, which can constantly shake our balance.

Indigenusness, however, is an attitude of grass roots tradition and knowledge that is embedded in my own history and upbringing. It constitutes a place from which

we cannot stand up and walk out of, because of the efforts of collective research that advocate and assert radical liberation for Native American or indigenous groups, in the traditional sense of decolonizing our thought processes. If it is indigenosity or near nativeness that makes this project real, authentic and valid, then a critical folkdance pedagogy supports the decolonizing reflexive process of exposing marginality. Hence, indigenous people, near natives, anyone, even myself can perform dance as part of a process of community building, spiritual liberation, and global education.

Folkfeminists reexamine history in order to demystify it by rationalizing distortions and exaggerations, in this case folklore, whose knowledge bank has been thwarted by traditional anthropological approaches. The cultural identity, then, of indigenous groups expressed through music, language and dance performance will be rearticulated through the lens of third world feminist practices. "Courage and resistance derive inspiration from earlier models of female power and strength. The fact that women's resistances in precolonial times may not have been named as feminist does not mean that they did not exist" (Katrak 2006, p. 57). These resistances are couched in folktales, mythology, religious scripture, and popular culture defy gendered oppression by strategically examining patriarchal uses within institutions.

Feminisms are also reflexive about the challenges of representing "other" women and exposing the complexities of belonging in the center and margins while contemplating differences and identities within cultural traditions that are many times practiced by women in academia (Jaschok, 2000; Minha, 1989; Mohanty, 1998; Narayan, 1997; Shohat, 1998). Women in third world are already agents, to some degree, that contribute to advancing their social equality within their systems. And

being able to name and locate these cultural spaces of transformation, clarifies where we can gain insight from successes and failures of marginalized women's voices. So that we can build upon the visions of others, gathering strength found in cross disciplinary women's studies can solidify the idea that we have much to learn from women who are creative and resilient in how they live their lives as they too deconstruct patriarchal establishments. The modes of communication that make a dialogue possible is one of the challenges for our solidarity as we seek to find a union that can move beyond language barriers that isolate and towards creating spaces of mutual exchange of knowledge can exist within and outside boundaries that have been controlled by nation-state borders. To locate and specify some of our own gaps in how we choose to live our lives within our first world realities comes from knowledge within third world women's spaces.

In other words, Third World Feminisms in the context of folkfeminist methodology add to the dialogue of indigenous knowledge within the collective identities/agents of women in Asia, Africa, Latin America and U.S. feminist of color (Collins, 2000; Darder, 2002; Delgado-Gaitan, 1993; Dillard, 2000; Espinosa-Dulanto, 2004; Estés, 1995; Goodman, 2004; Henderson, 2000; hooks, 1990; Katrak, 2005; McDowell, 1995; McRobbie, 2001; Mohanty, 2004; Narayan, 2000; Pui-Lam, 2005; Sampaio, 2004; Solorzano, 2001; Spivak, 1986; Trihn, 1999; Villenas, 1996; Visweswaran; 1994). These struggles arise out of our quest for visibility of our diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences and continue to address injustices and negative effects of race, class and sexuality through cultural differences. We are situated as oppositional, at times even fierce through our writing practices as a tool for healing and

self-defense in hopes of creating more room to stand on, speak from and live through with the intention to learn and change. Critical third world feminists utilize multiple discourses in order to cross-reference for example, public and private institutions, social, racial, gender, and educational, literary sources. Third world feminist practices are spaces to recreate a legitimate knowledge base, where women from any culture and country can identify with same concerns regarding a variety of women's life experiences, especially to provide solutions based on solidarity to those who are most eager for peace.

Literary examples of folkloric feminisms are located in tales and stories for example, Sandra Cisneros's (1991) "Woman Hollering Creek," where she weaves new stories with old forms of storytelling as a form of political and personal resistance, engaging the present with the past (Garcia, 1995). As a Chicana writer, she mediates between folk and literary genres and between the elite and the pueblo or working class. The performance of folklore enables the rupture and contestation of communal acts to explore identity and voice. The potential force of indigenous ethnography or near native ethnography takes marginalized perspectives and creates new variations on how to identify with the world.

Writing through a collective agency, while conscious of plurality of agents and voices, is what creates a transformation space for writing resistance. It is through a common purpose that first world feminism, people of color in the U.S., Black Feminism, women from the Black Atlantic, U.S. Latina feminism, and Critical Third World feminism participate in creating change within our everyday lives and within the organizations and institutions that surround us. The methodological practices of Folk-

feminists contest historical junctures of colonialism, global economy, race, and gender, as we react to our local surroundings in ways that sustain our research.

### Methodological Practices: Qualitative/Interpretive

#### *Location for Study*

I conduct this study in the Atlantic coast region in Barranquilla, Colombia and traveled to Cartagena. The representation of African and Native American dances and have been maintained in this coastal region. Cartagena was the initial port of entry for the African slave trade into South America. Both cities are known for their festive carnival traditions.

#### *Duration of Study*

The observation and interview processes lasted for 11 months from 2003-2004. I went back for 2 weeks in 2008.

#### *Interviews*

I interviewed several dance leaders including teachers; Monica Lindo from Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla, Carmen Melendez from Palma Africana, Luz Marina Cañate from INSTENALCO, Martina Camargo from Alé Kuma, and Esther Forero, singer and songwriter. This included class observations in public and private dance schools and organizations in order to understand their subjective experiences about the impact of song and dance expressions in their community.

#### *Observations*

I observed teachers, students, musicians, public performers in order to refer to current contexts of performance. In order to capture this, video footage of the following



performances were utilized for the study: Festival of Dances at Virginia Rossi Catholic school by special invitation from INSTENALCO school, INSTENALCO dance festival at Amira de la Rosa, folkdance classes at Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla, INSTENALCO dance class, Palma Africana (Carmen Melendez) dance class, public performances by Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla in Cartagena, Arte y Parque cultural park theatre and Bellas Artes School of Arts, Cumbia in carnaval S.A. 2004 with special permission from the carnival president's office.

### *Fieldnotes*

I took notes during school functions, who was presented and what was being done and conveyed to the student body through dance. In addition, I recorded personal journals throughout the research process. I recorded situations surrounding conditions and attitudes of dance teachers. I also used journals and fieldnotes to document the process of writing research candidly exposing the research process.

### *Archival Research*

I examined archival materials related to carnival and folkdancing in the region found in the following locations: La Aduana *El Heraldo* archives, Museo del Carnaval, El Tiempo archives where newspaper archives are housed. I went to Biblioteca Bartolome de las Casas in Cartagena and Universidad de Cartagena, Universidad Simon Bolivar. These literary documents supported historical and or literary underpinnings to compare and contrast dances, symbols, and uses that are relevant to understanding folkdance as part of working class experiences. Since the relevance of dance as an action-based practice relies heavily on performance archival, sources are scarce when

referring to expressions of dance. The absence of material in archival resources is relevant in determining the relevancy of dance practices.

### *Video and Photography*

For purposes of triangulation and cross-referencing, I collected video footage in order to compare lived experiences in classroom instruction, staged performances, and festival or carnival performance and how these meanings are interpreted as part of a layering process. Photographs are also included to provide a symbolic frame of reference that represent current forms of dance practices.

## CHAPTER 6

### RESTAGING CARNIVAL: FOLKDANCE AS RESISTANCE

*The native intellectual who takes up arms to defend his nation's legitimacy and who wants to bring proofs to bear out that legitimacy, who is willing to strip himself naked to study the history of his body, is obliged to dissect the heart of his people.* (Fanon, 1963, p. 211)

A layering of voices and their translations are necessary within this textual analysis to cross cultural boundaries of race, class and gender, to learn through poetic expressions of men and women regarding certain dances and the festive spaces where they are performed. The historical nature of certain dances include brief references to the division of social classes, as well as the symbolic history of Farota, Garabato, Paloteo, Baile Negro (Mapalé), Cumbia, and Bullerengue. Symbols like Marimonda and sombrero vueltiao, rooted in ancestral representation in the Atlantic Coast, specifically in Barranquilla and Cartagena provide background knowledge of African and Native American presence. I conclude with autoethnographic perspectives of moving through the complexities of the interview process as I meet 2 women folk singers, Martina Camargo and Esther Forero, who provided important personal and political messages about their lives. An understanding of chanted dance, the poetic messages, symbols and meanings solidifies a foundation for the interpretation of folkdance as feminist practice as mutually bonding expressions that serves to open the paths for forging a space in folkfeminist pedagogies within the context of folkdance and song traditions.

## Carnival as Freedom of Expression

One significant space of freedom in the colonial New World has been through the resistance of African slaves. The Palenqueros (from Palenque) founded their own corregimientos, in the Pacific coast in the 1600s establishing their autonomy from Spain. The survival of freed African slaves, cimarrones, are an undeniable influence within the Atlantic Coast culture.<sup>13</sup> These carnival practices in coastal areas are no longer emblematic as an extension of European culture because the survival of these practices are carried out with a new set of changed circumstances that now autonomously identifies the trajectory of African people, not only as from the land of the African continent or slaves but also those whose identities changed as an experience during the Middle Passage (Mintz & Price, 1992). Ancestors were freed during pockets of time and space where freedom finds solidarity around the beaches and river banks as memory and nostalgia is transformed into the present. The journey that begins with an association of oceanic waters, exploitation and physical sacrifice, finds a space of refuge that is different than European or Bakhtinian concepts of carnival because dancing communities were able to maintain and integrate traditions due to the vastness of tropical lands where autonomous cultures, like African and Native, are distinguishable because of the journey and combination of being from Africa and being indigenous during the colonization of Spain. Cartagena, the first port of entry, became a central location for the influx of slavery and material goods, making this coastal area a

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<sup>13</sup> Not until 1991, with the review of the constitution, did Africans for Palenque have legal representation in the government affair and recognized as part of the Colombian nation-state.

significant territory of freedom and emancipation after manumission in 1851 (Bushnell, 1993). Carnival symbolizes a social movement from oppression to freedom.

Land could not be legally owned by Africans; however, the knowledge of land and labor justifies an African indigenesness in its own right, validated through experience and familiarity with the harsh sun and vast waters of the tropics. The union between African and Native cultures revolved around land, crops and navigating the sea and riverbanks for sustenance. Indigenous women, owning land and losing their men after the colonial wars due to illness and massacre, depended on African men to provide assistance for tending lands. Thus, Africans upon marrying indigenous land owning women also inherited the land, creating mestizaje or cultural mixtures. While separated by ethnic traditions, languages and cultures, the foundation of dances created a spirit of union among groups. Carnival, then, becomes a space or a public stage where expressions of resistance are central to maintaining folkdance practices as collective identities are founded by ethnic difference.

These unions sharing the commonality of dance practices, continue to be an undeniable influence during carnival celebrations dating back to 1777 in Cartagena (Escalante, 1965) where traditions carried over and spread throughout the coast and riverwaters. In 1851, African cultures spread throughout the country after manumission and continued to influence dance practices as a way to piece together communities as part of a way of life to establish belonging, identity and presence through dance. In addition, festival celebrations, given the history of slavery in Spanish, French and

English colonies on the Atlantic coastal areas, are similar in spirit.<sup>14</sup> The following carnival celebration in Cartagena at the foot of La Popa, or the summit, describes what is considered to be one of the first documented examples of how slaves negotiated space and created solidarity through these carnival practices despite oppression.

During those times, slaves would congregate in cabildos, some were Mandinga, others Caravaii and other Congos of the Mine etc. each one had his king, queen and princes, joyfully imitating their countries' traditions while holding wooden shields wrapped in colorful paper, wearing tiger leather aprons and on their heads cartons adorned by feathers and vibrant colors. Their faces, breasts, arms and legs were painted red. They would sing jumping around to rhythm of the drums . . . the women were not dressed African style meaning, they were not nude, their owners would dress them up in their own precious jewels because even in this practice they would want to produce emulation and competition. The queens of the cabildo walked proud shining from precious stones and gallons of gold, with the queens' crown shining with diamonds, emeralds, pearls and of pure blackness. One would notice that the riches they were wearing could have liberated them and their families, and that after the festivities they would sadly return home and reduced again in suffering the moral pain and the physical hardships of being a slave. (Escalante, 1965, p. 12)

Now local history, exemplified through carnival practices and more specifically through folkdance and folk music has also evolved into a staged performance focused both where carnival traditions continue to be a space of negotiation, representation and memory throughout the trajectory of carnival practices. They have evolved into a form of entertainment marking divisions among socio economic classes. These differences are felt by the enjoyment and frustrations of carnival practices that are run by the Carnival S.A. Enterprise and less tumultuous celebrations held by lower strata

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<sup>14</sup> Carnival in New Orleans, Havana, Rio de Janeiro, and Trinidad have similar roots and continuances. These are celebration that communities prepare year round for the pre-lenten days. According to the Chinese calendar, the shifts in determining the actual dates of celebration depends on the timing of the rotation of the sun. This lapse in time is significant for many cultures during February or March, these days are also moments of lost time that allow sins to be forgotten. Other cultures celebrate this time with the new moon, sundown in Islamic traditions, Ash Wednesday in Christian traditions or the New Year in Chinese traditions. The apparent oppositional can be interpreted as sinful or celebratory action.

neighborhoods. For example, the experience of the Gran Parada, showcasing floats is the most expansive mainstream street parade during carnival. Traditional folkdancing is reserved for another day during the Batalla de Flores. This day the street was accessible, most were frustrated by the thick crowd contrasting with the carnival of Simón Bolívar, where dancers and audiences were not overpatrolled and controlled by local authorities.

*Fieldnotes: The Grand Parade*

I made my way in with the crowd, vueltiao hat and comfy shoes. We were all heading the same direction and when we arrived at the calle 40 street, all I saw were groups of people almost angry and frustrated pushing their way through the crowd and shooting silly string and water into the air agitating the rest of what was left of our patience. I could hardly breathe as I was being dragged in with the crowd. “Be careful, people have been trampled before, you have to be aggressive sometimes to fight your way through the crowd” is what some folks recommended. Having a special badge hanging off my neck made was all the same because masses were pushing me in all directions. No floats or parades were in sight on this day. I left fighting for a place to see or take pictures as a newsreporter, a novice of early research requirements that day without any luck. I bought a tasty bag of mango with salt and lime and was grateful for that atleast, not making my trip in vain. When I arrived home I closed the curtains, I was not about to let the glare of the sun block the 14” TV screen, the only hope of participating on this momentous game day. I sat in, waiting against my will but also taking in the indifference that permeated as I could sense the tired of the same ol’ same ol’ look of the crowd on TV; the chaos of messy crowds and the unforgiving sun. I listened attentively to the Caracol newsreporters yearly comments on how exhilarating

and awesome life becomes during carnival season. When asked if I had enjoyed the carnival, I hesitantly replied “Of course, it was exhilarating and awesome” as to not spoil their expectation. Battling frustration was not the Carnival I expected nor the one I enjoyed as a child. And the false expectations would be the right combination of emotions to begin regrouping my focus in this layering of textual memory, nostalgia and history. The following poem in El Herald newspaper puts into perspective the deceptions of masking our true emotions felt during moments of celebration.

*Carnaval*

Jubilosamente las enmascaradas  
ponen una nota de mofa a la suerte  
y con la faunalía de las carcajadas  
las inspiraciones la locura vierte

En estos desfiles a las desbandadas  
nadie suspira ni tampoco advierte  
cual será la pena de las enlutadas  
por aquellos seres que cegó la muerte.

¡Cuán alegres todos! Cuanta mofa canta  
la historia del gozo cuando se levanta  
tumbando el silencio de la humana paz  
Pero cuantos de estos fingiendo venturas  
cubrirán la pena de sus desventuras  
misteriosamente bajo el antifaz . . . (Carnaval, El Herald, 1960)

anónimo

*Carnival*

The masked joyfully  
place a note of mimickry on luck  
and with the faunal of the cackles  
craziness subverts inspiration

In these parades for the disbanded  
no one sighs nor cautions



what will be the sadness of those in mourning  
for those who death blinded

How happy is everyone! How much does mimicry sing  
the history of happiness when it arises  
knocking over the silence of human peace.  
But how many of these, faking their ventures  
will cover the sadness of their unadventures  
mysteriously under their masks.

Anonymous

The author criticizes the celebratory nature of carnival because it disrupts introspective human insight. Those who do not belong or do not participate are afflicted by the death that also occurs during this time, this reality is glossed over by the masses. The author was astonished by the illusion of carnivalesque joy as a ridiculous façade flaunting an unrealistic pleasure. The superficial thrill of carnival overthrows what is fundamentally important for humanity; that happiness is part of a history of people where silence can be interpreted as peaceful action. However those who venture out and pretend to be happy are actually hiding problems that remain buried. An unspoken truth of what remains hidden or unexposed in public carries over into private lives. The masked or two-faced, are secretive and shameful about the sorrowful lies that are kept. Conflictive representations of protest, and discontent are seldom revealed in these spaces of carnival culture. Since performances carry a weight of history, people's culture and various dances as a fixed category, somber voices of lament do not fall into the nature of carnival.

*Field Memories March 2004*

The Carnival of Simon Bolivar takes place close to Barrio Abajo, middle low income Barranquillans participate in this area of the city. Standing along the street with

my cameras, no one asked to see a badge; unique when compared to the complicated process of for Carnival S.A. I immediately noticed the homemade dresses. Costumes were uniformly designed and planned by unknown artists. These artists unknown are the mothers, grandmothers and sisters who seam the fabric, sew on lace, stitch sequence and plead the many ruffles. Their art is one of the most essential components because they piece together and pass on traditions that symbolize the Atlantic coast, crafting the material reality of Carnival. The women behind the sewing machines are the silent *hacedoras* or doers at work, patiently cutting and saving money to buy the most affordable pieces of fabric. Waistlines measured, hems pinned and buttons stitched one at a time, one person at a time, one comparsa group at a time and one parade at a time. But to know what happens behind the scenic route, the long hours at work intensifies the emotion and nostalgia felt during those few moments of watching girls and boys effortlessly glide across the pavement in their brand new but very old traditions. These *hacedoras* craft the imagination and fantasies of Cumbia and Mapalé as they spontaneously come to life this day. My mother and grandmother were also these seamstresses who stitched prize winning costumes for family and friends who partook in dancing festivals. Las madres, cut and measure the creative force behind the belabored practices of folkdance while the joy in these children's eyes make it all worthwhile. That moment was proof that Carnival is space for children's corporeal expression even for the tired little ones peacefully taking their siesta on the sidelines despite the noise and heat. The dancers and the audience commingled and cheered each other on, the audience proud, much like the days of Homecoming parades and parents coming to see their children be publicly observed. Watching and being watched

confirms our existence once more. I took out my Cannon 3 pixel and some dancers flirted with the cameras while others ignored it. I am a visible camerawoman participating and yet an average spectator who learns how to document happiness and celebration as a social movement. The difference is that I have been waiting and hoping to dance a Cumbia on the other side of this camera for so long now. For now, I absorb these children charging down the streets as warriors, chieftains and princesses in all of their pride, freely expressing and owning their spirits and the streets; no floats, no bleachers, no crazy fluorescent lights or noisemakers, no angry crowds shoving. My dancing self anticipates the drums to the Baile Negro coming up ahead then I negotiate time with the camera. I notice her coming forward, hers is an inward mapalé, oblivious to those around her, serious and focused, the whole group kneels down and the ebony skinned boy steadfastly looks into the Cannon's eyes, a long time I am sure, as I was frustrated losing the photographic concept of precision timing. His eyes revealed intensity. We saw each other for a moment. The picture has a name and a voice of people; simple, whole and complete. He knew I was taking the photo, though he did not smile for my camera, like the others, but I still heard his warrior voice. The tiger costumes resembling the 1777 depiction of carnival practices was a similar emblem of representations of blackness.

### Folkdance Histories as Resistance

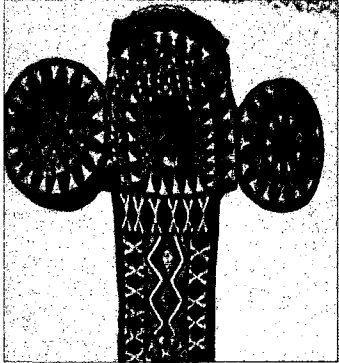
Folkdances whose main purpose is to reenact and create the illusion of remaining unchanged have symbols, objects or dress codes that are unchallenged much like dominant histories are kept intact in order to describe the significance of a time

period. These symbols describe a resistance that emerges out of a need for subordinate cultures to unite identities and histories for the purposes of freedom against Spanish colonialism. This mixture is best represented by the Cumbia. The literary analysis evokes Native and African Zulu and mulatto nostalgia. Cumbia's symbolic sombrero veultiao are also reflections of Native American Zenú culture. La Farota and El Paloteo represent real physical resistances against wars that were survived. Carnival dances also evoke different emotions, laughter and mockery, as in the Marimonda. In addition spiritual symbols of life and death, like the Garabato are dances that remain as allegories of Carnival. Furthermore, folkfeminist dances that evolve from Cumbia and Bullerengue carry action based representation especially for Africans and displaced women who establish their own styles within their own spaces away from the established order. As dances are difficult to understand outside of the performance context, I also lace my experiences and observations with lyrical texts that are women centered dances like the Cumbia and Bullerengue folkdances that provide additional foundations for understanding women's folkdance and song.

*La Marimonda: The Jokester of Folkdance*

At one time, the Marimonda mask figure was only used as a character during the Carnival of Barranquilla but now the masked character is performed as a group dance and used as an original emblem native only to the celebration of Carnival of Barranquilla Nina de Friedemann (1983) speculates that this masked costume/dance interpretation comes from the Barileke tribe in Africa. The original mask (Figure 1) has the same features as the Marimonda (Figure 2): elephant ears, round protruding rated eyes, and elephant nose. Whether or not the similarities are a coincidence, we should

also consider the possibilities of African meanings that are deeply embedded and retained through spaces of freedom.



*Figure 1. Barileke mask.*



*Figure 2. Marimonda mask.*

*Notes From INSTENALCO*

As I sat at lunch one day with one of the teachers at INSTENALCO, she shared her perspective of Marimonda history.

At one time poor people who could not afford to participate in carnival spectacles would make these costumes out of old torn suits and rags. The characteristic of the Marimonda joker personality grabs and pokes fun at others

and can get away with pranks. Mainly men began this tradition but now everyone does it.

The Marimonda dance is entirely improvised and chaotic. The literal translation of the word using colloquial language is “Mondá,” a vulgar term used for the phallus and mari, comes from Maria. Because this identity has become so popular in modern day carnivals, it has evolved into one of the most symbolic costume/dances that have been turned into a glamorous spectacle. The freedom of the marimonda costume is limitless, men and women of any social class can move in and out of race, class and gender boundaries. This face according to popular culture and media representation is the global face of Barranquillan Carnival.

As in the case of Marimonda, it connotes a protruding phallic symbol and relocates the religious importance of Maria through exaggeration and mockery. The interpretation of the marimonda performance is one of deconstructing class structures by ridiculing the organization of carnival. On one level, the mask and dance implies a criticism towards Spanish Catholicism. It also signifies ways in which the lower class would integrate into higher-class system by hiding their identity. This mask has now allowed more people, including women to afford and participate in modern day celebrations, where the boundaries between public and private are have been transformed and blurred both figuratively and historically.

#### *Native American Cumbia Hat*

On the way home from my first trip to the beach, I noticed this older man who was using this hat on an ordinary day to project himself from the scorching sun rays (Figure 3) . This is not usual within the city because mostly campesinos or those who

live on the outskirts of the city continue to use the sombrero for its practicality, not as a symbol of carnival nor a prop for Cumbia dance. The linguistic meaning of the verb *vueltiao* is made up using the castillian language but combines grammar consonants and vowels to create new meaning. It is used as a noun, verb, participle, and adjective in this context. The meaning of the word *vueltiao* is a combination of two words: *vuelta*; a noun meaning rounded edge and *voltear*, verb meaning to turn around or *voltiado*, something turned upside down. *Vueltiao* can also refer to the symmetrical reflections within the weave that create the illusion of a mirrored-patterns.



*Figure 3.* Sombrero vueltiao.

For example, Villadiego (2001) made connections between the land patterns in Zenú indigenous horticulture that similarly share the illusion of the weaves. In other words, the weaving patterns and the horticulture traditions are represented in the weave designs and patterns (Figure 4). The reflection in the water depicts an illusion of symmetrical and geometric congruencies similar to pyramids, squares and triangles

found in the vualtiao hats. However, the origin of the hat represents agricultural systems that at present can be found in La Ciénaga and Mompós (Figure 4). Indigenous contributions of folklore symbolism have been completely overlooked. Ciénaga is also a place that is considered a “mecca” of Cumbia, possibly because of its proximity to the Magdalena River and its long distance from authorities. In addition, the caña de milo, a wooden flute made of out of a thin sugar cane, indicates that indigenous cultures were experts of wind and sound. The caña de milo, indigenous to the Atlantic Coast, is used to play the melody of a traditional Cumbia song.

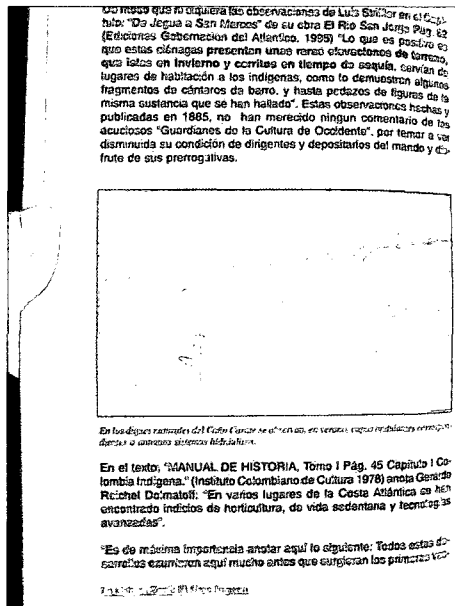


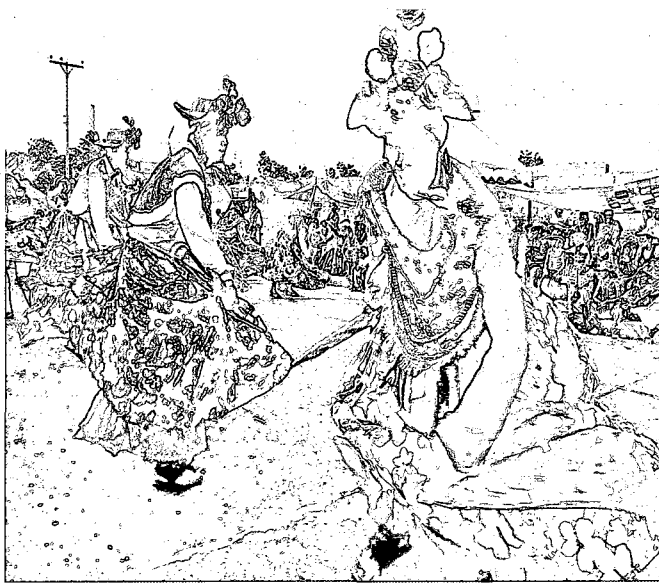
Figure 4. Zenú hydrolic system.

### *El Baile de la Farota*

The Farota dance (Figure 5), named after native Farota people, represents historical resistance against colonial Spain. The men were seeking revenge against the violent rapes and human injustices that were committed against their wives and daughters. They plotted to dress up as European women with flowered hats, umbrellas



and hoop skirts. As the men hid under their umbrellas, they strolled down the street hiding their identity. They would attempt to engage and attract the Europeans and when the Spanish men would finally come up to talk and flirt, they were caught off guard and defenseless against the Farota men who would then pull out their knives to kill the Spanish men. These massacres continued until they would no longer rape and murder their families. They were finally able to stop the violence.



*Figure 5. Farota dance.*

In contrast, the Farota Dance clearly expresses that indigenous uprisings were crucial for survival against Spanish authorities, implying a violent and aggressive means of self-defense. The Farota's are examples of uprising and resistance, not at all passive in their quest for human justice. The performance reiterates indigenous resistance toward authorities depicting a history of bloodshed between two cultural groups where men also had to rescue their women from colonial violence. The performance continues

to serve as a reminder of overturning dominant history as part of independence from Spain and establishes a Colombian identity (Appendix A).

*La Farota's Independence at INSTENALCO 2003*

While visiting the dance classroom one day, Luz made sure that I came by to see the assembly that she and her students had put together. The assembly was to commemorate Colombia's independence on July 20, 1810. I had no idea why the young men were wearing bright neon flowery dresses and cherry red lipstick. "Maybe there aren't enough women to dance" I thought to myself. One of the students could tell I was curious to know why they were all cross dressing. As to not get the wrong impression of their odd appearance, he said as he is walking off, "It's not what you think, you'll see what's going on later." The other male dancer looked embarrassed at having to wear dress and make-up, he was a rookie and was being indoctrinated for the first time into representing a national history through folkdance performance. I followed them into the gymnasium and recorded.

An embellished performance of exaggerated colors and dramatized colonial garb took over the gymnasium as the students and faculty cheered and laughed them on. Their bodies were conservatively covered from head to toe but their mimicking actions are liberating as the choreography projects a community that once worked together and continues to work together to establish a national identity. The gaudy costumes in red, green and yellow neon ruffles are accented by paper flowers that crown their hats. The flaunting buttocks' and synchronized umbrellas waver in the air, the students huddle and plan to attack but there is no sign of violence during this performance, it is already implied. The caña de milo flute echoes off the cement gym walls. This act is a symbol

of independence through satire as they recall a moment of historic victory in this public school (Appendix A).

### *El Paloteo*

The paloteo (Figure 6) is a representation of new found freedom from Spanish rule. This is the rise of the criollo middle class. Men, now loyal to the land represent Colombia's aristocracy. This is a warrior dance with wooden swords signifying victory and autonomy from the royal crown. The dancers fight for the war of independence in 1810, similar to the Farota dance but they unite for the establishment of sovereignty. This dance symbolizes an autonomous community free from Spain (Appendix A).



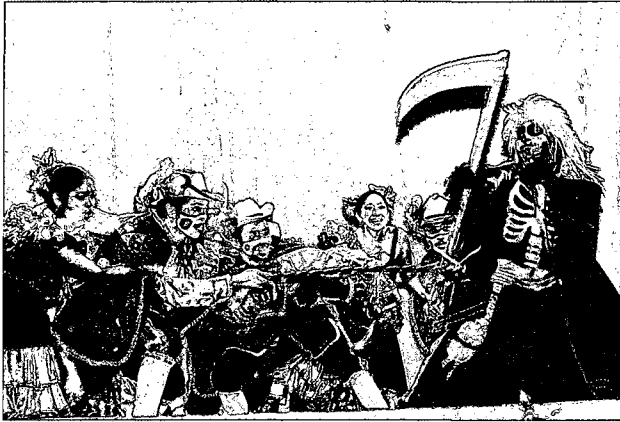
*Figure 6.* Kids playing freedom.

### *El Garabato*

El Garabato (Figure 7) is a carnival dance that symbolizes a struggle between life and death (Appendix A). Many of these popular dances can be traced to African origins (Ortiz, 1951). One interpretation considers this to be an Orisha's (African priest) arousal, a sexual satire using picaresque undertones as he uses a three foot long stick with a hook on the end. The hook is called a Garabato, once again another phallic symbol. Moving the Garabato stick from side to side, he destroys evil ways and opens a

new path to life. The Garabato is also a male warrior who searches to find a path where he can find a mate. The stick is cut into a V shape where one portion is larger than the other in order to cut through weeds with a hook. The hook, associated with cutting plants contains magical powers. At present, the Garabato is still used to open a path by striking the floor in addition to producing rhythms for chants and dances. Men and women dance together as men hold onto their sticks as part of a prop. Garabatos is a colorful, red, green and yellow costume. The men usually wear a hand-embroidered cape and hat and the women's ruffles are color coordinated. The devil or death, comes out with his Garabato stick scaring off the bodily sins of Carnival pleasure (Appendix A).

The Garabato, according to Fernando Ortiz (1951) is a phallic symbol and a religious emblem of life and death. The spiritual African undertones are used to attract women and a way to open a path to life. The male Orisha is responsible and credits himself for opening the path to life through the symbolic use of the garabato. The historical meanings place the male as the protagonist and central actor of nature, responsible for cultivating land. The virile strength of a warrior, is necessary in order to attract a female that emphasizes male dominance as he reaps the natural rewards of land and women. He who fights and has strength is privy to holding the garabato stick. In addition, this dance represents the new Criollo identity, the first generations of men who considered themselves to be part of New Granada, independent from the loyalty to Spain. In modern day performances of Garabato, men continue to carry the stick of life and death, sins and pleasures of carnival.



*Figure 7. El Garabato.*

*El Baile Negro*

Penalties against women who practiced African dances, or Baile Negro, during the 1600s were always more severe than those practiced by men. They were perceived as witchcraft and pagan beliefs. In addition, the use of drums was persecuted for forty years. The tambora or drum was the most symbolic form of maintaining culture due to its auditory, visual and energetic presence. Those in control insisted on controlling dance and music that led to a municipal treaty that prohibited the practice of Mapalé and Cumbia by the Popa, next to the sacred peak of Cartagena. If Africans danced Cumbé or Zarabanda, they were condemned to 200 whips and 6 years of work. Women were excommunicated from Spanish dominion. These dances began in Cartagena and were prohibited because it was considered that the soul of Satan would possess and enter the bodies of men and women as authorities would throw their drums into the fire pits.

Mapalé (Figure 8), however, was the only dance that was permitted during times of Spanish rule. Mapalé was named “the fish dance” due to the labor of extracting fish oil. They would burn the fish with torches. Its transformation changed from labor to

dance. The fish's movements after they are captured resemble the pelvic and midriff contractions to the beat of the drum (Appendix A).



*Figure 8. Mapalé*

*Newsreport Carnival 1997*

Gloria: We are watching on the screen the mestizaje (a group of black children appear on screen) As we see the participants are the youth from the barrio of San Philippe who are dancing to the sounds of the black rhythms like Bullerengue, Mapalé, Sereseseya and other exhilarating rhythms which cause the admiration of foreigners and commoners alike. And since they have appeared in the Carnival, they have occupied spaces of privilege where they've won competitions carrying with them their Congos of gold which have entitled them to be invited to perform in the parades the 11th of November in Cartagena.

Edgar (commentator): And meztizaje is exactly what signifies America, America is the land of meztizos that is why it is important to see how the drums have been placed on the scene with the mapalé, an African dance, brought by our ancestors, black slaves brought to the land of the Caribbean, in particular the Atlantic coast. The mapalé, which is what this is mostly comprised of, has its roots in an old dance that the blacks danced to on the islands of the Caribbean. This was called a candela which was a way to search for an expression of calenda as an aggressive form to dance with eroticism and total ecstasy. Checha and Claudia say that the Spaniards learned how to dance calenda hidden from the Spanish authorities on the islands. In contrast the blacks would group together to interpret these dances on festive holidays.

Gloria: Edgar, I am sure that more than one woman envies the black woman's hip movement, it is spectacular.

Edgar: The rhythmic movement, the joyful movements and to put it this way, aggressive movements have a total synchrony with the body, to be able to move

one's hips this way is to be in total communication with the drums. There is an unrelenting communication between the drums and the body's movement like there is a communication between the drummer and his drum.

Lastly, in reference to the text describing El Baile Negro and the Mapalé, the term "meztizaje" represents a New America where black slaves contributed to the Atlantic coast culture with erotic and exotic dances. Both African and Spanish people rebelled against authorities through dance expressions on Catholic holidays. The body becomes a space to be watched, an invitation to recreate a performance where the body becomes an expression of corporeal resistance. The black women's hip movements become the object of envy or desire where voyeuristic tendencies attach body parts to a distinct form of communication that exudes spectacle, rhythm, joy, aggression, synchronicity, and unrelenting human connection with sound. Carnival folkdance performances represent social activism within spaces of freedom, contributing to Caribbean culture. In opposition, dances that portray African women also run the risk of reifying natural or innate racial features within the social construction of difference. Holding onto stereotypes of slave history or identity may be harmful when conceptualized as a political tool, by the elite, to keep the classes in the correct order. Classifications of being savage, exotic or those who do not have the authority to make decisions about how they are being portrayed, are exported into an international spotlight of cultural capital.

### *La Cumbia*

Cumbia has multiple meanings within each individual, time period, town, or performance. The nostalgia connotes something of value that has been lost or stolen. It is also one's own physical space of freedom, a place of refuge, a mountain summit, an

admiration of women or Saint Martin experiencing carnal and spiritual pleasure. Cumbia is also the preferred dance in the carnival of Barranquilla and Colombia's national folkdance. The word could have derived from *cumbe*, *cumbancha*, El Negro Kumbe of the Congo or Nkumbe, an African word meaning disorder and fun (Pombo, 1995). Cumbia can signify all of these definitions and many more due to the constant changes within cultural performances.

On festive occasions during the colonial period Spanish authorities separated women according to skin color and dress attire. The dancehall performances in Cartagena, spending lavish amounts of money on these spectacles with "the slave's sweat which gave way for everything," were first reserved for the White women of Castilla where they would play the official regiment of Cartagena. The second dance was reserved for the "parda" or brownish indigenous women where they would play their own military regiment. And finally the last dance was reserved for free black women. All of the respective classes had to be of relatively high social positions and be able to afford proper attire. Those who were poor, free-slaves, dark, black, laborers, carbon mine workers, coach drivers, fisherman and were shoeless did not have a dance hall. Moreover, the process of segregation focusing on the women, in addition to class and race, was a way to control the purity of the White race. The high value placed on women by phenotype and dress attire played an essential role in prohibiting the race mixture within controlled social spaces.

Dance practices were an essential expressive language between both cultural groups, expressing a common bond, a confusion of human interaction. Both lower castes join in ritual combining the gaitas with the drums, at times dancing silently and at



others singing aloud. Socio-economic interdependence is a factor that unites the Native and the African cultures. The courtship encounters would take place far away from the supervised boundaries, by the seashore or in rural areas. Indigenous/ African music and dance generated a crucial element in *meztizaje* to understand the meaning of modern day cumbia. During cumbia, lighter skinned women, indigenous or mixed, would seduce or decline their male courtiers depending on economic well being and physical attributes. At first, indigenous women would choose partners that would help them to tend land and African men also were dependent on Indigenous women that would legally enable them to own land. Courting indigenous women would increase their opportunities for acquiring a higher socio-economic position. The need to communicate corporeally generated a crucial element in how Cumbia, an essential part of the Colombian tri-ethnic identity was produced. The courtship process during cumbia was a political and interdependent exchange and negotiation between both Indigenous and African cultures. The groups then begin to unite their indigenous practices of music and dance as Escalante (1965) explained “las dos castas menos antagonistas ya, se reúnen frecuentemente para bailar, confundidas, acompañando las gaitas a los tamborileros . . . la gaita y la cumbiamba se bailan de idénticas maneras” (p. 26). “The two castes, less antagonistic now, get together frequently to dance, [the castes] confused, the gaitas accompany the drummers . . . the gaita and the cumbiamba are danced in an identical fashion.”

Women have also been central in maintaining Cumbia practices. This following newspaper clip was a precursor to Jorge Artel’s poem “Cumbia.” The nostalgic prose in this article later becomes a refined poem that personifies Cumbia as an African woman.

Artel was a pioneer in establishing African identity in Barraquilla and for Colombia in general (Prescott, 2000). The artistic drawing titled “Rumba” used in this media clip reflects the controversial mixtures between Africans and Europeans through the mulatta’s woman’s body where she takes ownership of both cultures confidently revealing the beauty of her bare skin while wearing the layers of a portion of a Flamenco dress. Because of the nature of the poem and Artel’s history, this artform is an intentional direct look or vision directa, of what Cumbia means for Afro-Colombians. The woman appropriates both aspects of the duality of nature and culture into a whole identity of introspection and not into the direction of the public eye. The palm tree off to the left is overshadowed by the centrality of the woman’s arms as she strongly holds them up over her head exposing her head.<sup>15</sup> Jorge Artel is directing our vision into the fusion of both African and Spanish culture are meshed as an expression of meztizaje, elegance and pride (Figure 9).



Figure 9. “Cumbia” by Jorge Artel.

<sup>15</sup> As I look through my mother’s old albums, the covers on Cumbia albums cut off the African man’s face with a palm branch or exposes his bare chest. The black man drinks and the White women are central on the cover. Black women are never projected on these covers.

There is a cry of gaitas  
diluted in the night.  
and the night, full of coastal rum,  
shakes its cold wings  
over the penumbra of the beach,  
altering the rumor of the portal winds.

An amalgam of shadows and lights of sperm,  
the frenetic cumbia,  
the diabolic cumbia,  
rides on its dark rhythm  
over the agile hips  
of the sensual female,  
And the earth,  
like a black woman's warm armpit,  
her bitter vapor rises, shaking densely  
under the furious feet  
that kneed the beats of the drum.

The tightened human ring  
is a carousel of meat and bone,  
confused with drunken shouts  
and the seaman's sweat,  
of women who taste like the tar of the port,  
of fresh sea salt  
and of gunman's air.

She moves like a serpent  
Rattling sounds,  
to the clicks of the compass  
that joyful maracas  
sprinkle over the hours  
of timeless noises.

It is an angry dragon  
sprouting one hundred heads,  
that bites its own tail  
with gigantic tusks  
Cumbia!-black dance, dance of my land-  
An entire race shouts  
within those electronic gestures,  
by the contorted pirouette  
of epileptic thighs!

A yearning for the jungle trots  
and of ignited bonfires  
which brings from the dead times  
a chorus of living voices.

There beats an aboriginal memory,  
an African roughness  
over the hardened leather where the drummers,  
-new sleep walking gods that celebrate happiness-  
they learned how to make thunder  
with their calloused hands,  
all powerful for the algarabía

Cumbia! My grandparents danced  
the sensual music. Old vagabonds  
that were black, terror of quarreling  
and of cumbiamberos  
in other far away cumbias  
at the tip of the sea . . .

#### *Cumbia as Spiritual Woman*

Jorge Artel's (1985) literary expressions unite the spirit and the body by rhythmically synchronizing the present with the nostalgic past using vivid images of a people yearning to celebrate and remember their own history. In "La cumbia," the black female body (Figure 9) is a central figure representing both joy and anger, the carnal and the metaphysical, life and death, as it relates to the dual nature of spirituality. The six senses revealed through an amalgam of land, sea, and woman, come to existence metaphorically by performing cumbia.

The spirituality of cumbia in combination with the mixture of the winds, drinking, perspiration, noise and nostalgic memories of a far away land combine to accentuate the woman's mysterious and dark feminine powers. For example, her sensuous and entrancing hip movements, her feet in complete synchronization with time and rhythm, knead the land as she conjures a special recipe with her electronic gestures

and epileptic thighs. Consequently, the adoration and bewitchment of women, especially her under arm aromas connote a mesmerizing fragrance, which is essential for igniting the “light of sperm.” Within this context, the light represents the life giving powers of procreation. The “fueling” of sperm, is dual in nature. From the man’s perspective the woman entrances the “seaman” into noticing more than just the movement of the thighs. This angry, frenetic, and diabolic symbolic sexual encounter is an exasperating ritual but also a distraction from the confusing elements surrounding the environment, from the tar-polluted waters to the smoke-polluted air. The woman embodies this environment yet she portrays a powerful and mysterious force of nature and like the aromas that come from the earth, the woman too gives life with her scent or can embody serpent-like characteristics sprouting “one hundred heads.”

The metaphors of the serpent and the dragon are considered symbols of evil within the Christian religion but within the powers of Ogún, the serpent symbolizes death. Ogun’s ase, similar to Axe samba of the Bahia in Brazil, is a dynamic force of the spiritual world. In addition the words thunder, fire, bonfires and electronic are similar to the god Egbado who is the priestess of god and thunder, a powerful dance that releases pressure under energy. The metaphysical powers are enacted through the six senses and embodied through the woman.

A communication between the woman’s angry feet and the drum beat evokes a complete physical and metaphysical correspondence through the six senses: the sound of cry of the gaitas, drunken shouts, beats of the drum, rattling and clicks, the smell of the arms and the coastal rum, the taste of tar and salt, the sight of the shadows, lights of sperm, the human ring near an ignited bonfire dancing in pairs in a circle and through

the touch of the drummers calloused hands. The sixth sense, which is connoted through the “drummers calloused hands” or “sleep walking gods” in conjunction with the imagery of the serpent and the dragon biting its own tail, represents an ancient image of the dragon’s body as life/death cycle. The recurring images of the circle, such as the human ring, the dragon, the carrousel and pirouette, are dynamic forces that conjoin the good/evil dichotomies into one.

The African spirit in cumbia is alive and thriving and as previously suggested, the power of Ogún within the drums “dilutes” the sound of the indigenous gaitas, whose personified cries vanish with the winds and are enthralled into the process of merriment and seduction. Although the indigenous roots, symbolized by the gaita, are stated at the beginning of the ritual, its contributions seemingly disappear and are overshadowed by the African vision, whose dominant actions appropriate meanings for their own culture and identity. In one context, as imagery of a black woman plays the central role of spirituality, life and death yet, as a national symbol, the body is hidden, conserved and reduced to an object of desire.

*Cumbia de Zulú y Mulato*

(Black chant, slow song)

The night was waiting  
for the evening to die  
to give itself to the cumbia,  
cumbia of drum and candles  
crying candle wax  
dripping down your arms  
and all in a black circle  
take turns laced (lazo) in black.  
You have to dance her with feeling  
with hand at the waist  
drag the foots through the sand

and shake like the sugar cane  
Cumbia of my suffered race  
you look like a dreaming (risueña) black girl  
with good flavor  
a canistel, apote and pineapple  
The cumbia is flirtish  
Litúrgica señorial and jealous  
If she loves the flute placer  
she also likes the gaitero  
her music is entrancing  
with the sahe of the cumarú  
because if we are outside  
she ways "monadita" e zulú  
come mulata listen to the beat  
of maracas guiro y maguaré  
Quitno tumbá and quiaquai  
smells of smoke, tobacco and women.  
(Anonymous, 1955)  
*Cumbia of Zulú and Mulatto*

(Canto de negros, música sutil)

La noche estaba esperando  
que la tarde se muriera  
para entregarse a la cumbia  
cumbia de tambó y velas  
los llantos de las espermas  
chorreando por tus brazos  
y todos en negra rueda  
tornamos en negro lazo  
Hay que bailarla con maña  
Con la mano a la cadera  
Arrastrar el pie en la arena  
Y menearse como caña  
Cumbia de mi raza sufrida  
Parece negrita risueña  
Con sabor a cosita buena  
A canistel, zapote y piña  
La cumbia es cual coqueta  
Litúrgica señorial y con celos  
Que si ama al de la flauta  
También le gusta el gaitero  
Su música es hechicera  
Con la sombra de cumarú  
Porque si estamos fuera

nos dice “monasita” e zulú  
Ven mulata escucha mi compás  
De maracas guiro y maguaré  
Quinto tumbá y quiaquia  
Con olor a humo a buen tabaco y mujé  
(Anónimo, 1955)

In the poem, *Cumbia de Zulú y Mulatto*, the author describes Cumbia as a way to flirt with women. Women are central and yet their voices are not represented because according to this author, Cumbia is meant to lure or cast a spell on women. They are a desire that becomes part of the environment, mysterious and unattainable. At the end of the poem describing a Cumbia ritual the poet ends with the image of “smoke, tobacco and women” all objects of desire in order to escape from the realities of work. Cultural and ethnic mixtures are evident but the male voice in both poems suggests that although women are the reason and purpose for Cumbia because they are a target for seduction by men that entice women with music and song. Both poets describe the Cumbia environment as a desire and mystery of women’s dance gestures, making Cumbia a central space for women to project themselves through dance.

Miguel Chajin (Díaz, 1993) also expresses Cumbia (Figure 10) as a heritage of people’s knowledge, a culture that has an indestructible connection to the land through blood ties. Land and blood is one of the most sacred imageries of human belonging and entitlement as an essential flow of life linked to what makes us human. Here Cumbia is not black, native or woman because its base is a tropical environment where hardships for any group is linked to labor and personal sacrifice that spills or is released into the rivers and sands of the Atlantic coast identity. This Cumbia is an emergent region, nurtured on the coast where the pristine new crisp earth of the “spongy sands” responds



to the past of the old river banks. Within these marginal banks, comforting, still and peaceful secrets fortify the regional or insular land. The purpose or meaning of Cumbia sustains the reasoning for working the land. A sense of freedom, spirituality and comfort found within the margins of land and water, the Magdalena River. Cumbia is the one who rows, the worker or actor that makes festivities possible. The author is aware that while people who dance Cumbia dance to make their scene, in order to forget hardships, they also know they are being watched and differentiated. Those who live on the edge, the river beaches and waters, who work the life of a fisherman also know who they are, because their festive identities are found in moments of dance that are projected as enjoyment, Cumbia is also an origin that at times is cherished and remembered. Arduous work links a blood line tied to nature and these Memories of land found in the essence of Cumbia through the work of Native sweat. Dancing creates a space where sorrows and grief can be forgotten. Cumbia Banquena captures the lament and hardships of those who work the land but “while dancing they make their scene they forget their sorrows” (Díaz, 1993, p. 39).

*Cumbia Banquena por Miguel Chajin F (Figure 10)*

You are the folklore that runs through my veins  
that circulates in tropical blood  
that spills in the spongy sandso  
on the old river beaches (señoriales)

Cumbia of the river bank, warm and serene  
that binds the parroquial environment  
you are what holds and spills my sweat through my brown skin  
of the Magdalene river  
and on the night of festival, cumbia rows  
you are the pool of arduous fisherman’s work  
a celestial gift . . .

While dancing they make their scene  
 they forget their sorrows  
 because you are a sweet origin

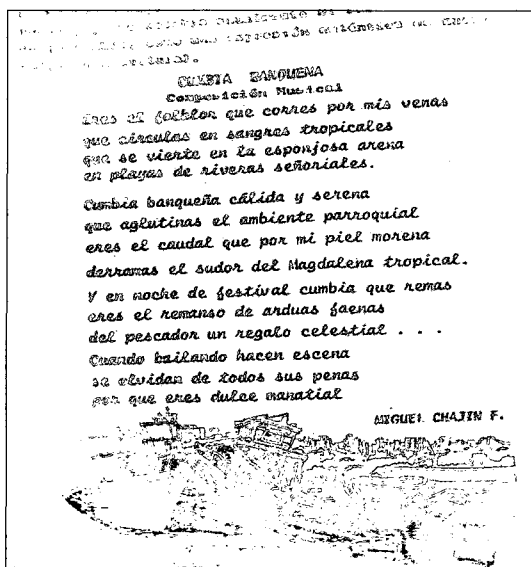


Figure 10. Cumbia Banquera

*My Poetic Fieldnotes: Waiting for Cumbia 8/03*

If I stretch my words across the ocean will I reach you just the same?  
 When nothing but eyes embrace me on street corners,  
 And folk dancing sere-se-sé and mapalé keeps me sane.  
 We've paved a 1000 mile connection  
 of webbed bridges of timeless emotion  
 while tamboras pound my accent and African back into me  
 as I sit at the screen savoring your sounds of sugarcane strums.

I dream by the Magdalena River, I forget about that #1 flag  
 When my waist swerves its curves to the swooshing of a "oopaaheeh"  
 and my hips follow the snaky routes of the countless fruit stands  
 Of tropical tastes of nispero- mandarin- tamarind lands  
 waiting for Jorge Artel's son to tell me of a mother's negro legends  
 holding torch lit rumbas that ride on the tide of seaside stars and salty hands

If I stretch my heart across the ocean, I'll reach you just the same  
 As I patiently wait to dance a cumbia  
 to teach you how my feet lead in your flirtish game.  
 I sing a BA, bidi BA, bidibabidibabidi BA !  
 with Totó La Momposina.

Stumbling home with firewater lips and burning hips  
Waiting for DJ Dan to play me a cumbia.

All in all, the above symbolic and contextual analyses of folkdance narratives demonstrate various attitudes about an Atlantic Coast identity based on land, women and dance. It has also become a space for men, though many anonymous, to express the centrality of women's contribution to dance. Although the male gaze projects a descriptive context on behalf of women, women in most instances are the practitioners and those who embody folkdance. Furthermore, various examples of African and Native American retentions continue to suggest that symbolic folkdances are expressions of *meztizaje* that connote nostalgia, memory, resistance and an outlet from the hard work life of marginalized social groups grounded in folklore and folkdance. Historical moments of struggle and dissent are engrained in the memory of performance as in *La Farota* or *El Paloteo*; these exemplify ways in which indigenous knowledge has subverted colonial dominance. Where dance on a social level was criminalized, in *Mapalé*, it continues to be an indestructible force of Afro-Colombian identity within the fabric of the Atlantic Coast. Nostalgia, economic oppression and racial divisions have in many ways subverted dominant culture. Complex *Zenú* inscriptions continue to be represented as the unique weaving patterns of *vueltaio* hats. The tension between the festive spirit of Carnival represented through *Marimonda* masks juxtaposed to the sadness of Carnival as depicted in the poem "carnival," constantly fluctuates between these attitudes and emotions that describe the human condition as depicted in these various texts.

## Cantaora's Sing Resistance and Hope

Cumbia and Bullerengue dances branch off into their independent expressions where social gatherings represent the high medium and low caste systems depending on women's wealth. Those women who were expectant mothers, single mothers, unwed women or older women who belonged to the lower social classes would establish their own communities. These class distinctions gave women spaces to communicate their own artistic expressions as well as the freedoms to express their own life situations with other women. Bullerengue and other chanted dances continue to provide a creative space to evolve and grow into its own dance and song exemplifying a wisdom and experience of community and womanhood. Bullerengue, as opposed to the more outward and public Cumbia, is an inward or self engaged expression that thrives in marginalized dance spaces. These continue to coexist as improvisational song and dance styles where folkdances, women dancing solo, and chanted dance, call and response are linked in practice. Unlike Cumbia, Bullerengue (Figure 11) evolved into its own folkdance and song genre and continues to be an artform that projects women's voices. Women folklore singers have been the protagonists in providing their own lived reality through music.

Bullerengue shares the same meaningful movements as Chandé, Fandango, and Tambora. In these cases, the similarity in dance styles changes in name depending on the town and the local identities within those locations. For example, in San Martin de Loba just south of Barranquilla and Cartagena, Tambora is the same object as the Cumbia drums on the coast. However, they all correspond to dancing in a circle with musicians where women are central to its performance either by chanting and/or

dancing under the nighttime sky along the beach or river banks. The essences of these dances correlate as leadership through courage, love, wisdom, nature and freedom found in artistic expressions that fluctuate between ancestral memories and the resistance towards women's expression of freedom and hardship.



*Figure 11. Bullerengue*

*Bullerengue Dance and Song*

The Fandango's or Calenda's are terms the Spanish used to describe the spaces and places where music and dances used to take place. According to Moreau St. Mery, Bullerengue was an African dance they also called Calenda; Fernando Ortiz (1951) traces it to African Yoruba and Ñañiguismo. Since expectant mothers and elders were not able to go to public Fandango's or parties they would hold their own social gatherings. This gave women a space to develop their own music and dance interpretations like Bullerengue, where young women would at one time dance in groups with their hands resting just below their navel, expressing both the sensual nature of womanhood and the pain during menstrual cycles. Hip movements are slightly

deeper and emphasized than in Cumbia. Vacunao (navel in Portuguese) Cumbia and Bullerengue all refer to a woman's navel, nature's womb (Hernandez, 1995). These dances symbolize the power of motherhood, birth, creation and a summit of knowledge. Cumbia, in contrast to Bullerengue, evolves into the well-known four-couple dance whereas as Bullerengue takes off as a matriarchal expression, giving voice to women's movement.

On the Atlantic Coast, Bullerengue has become more popular in 1992 and its current meanings have changed. Bullerengue singers and dancers in Marialabaja, according to Fuentes (2003), may not be aware of the history associated with maternity and womanhood, but they do identify with difficult working situations and the nomadic lifestyle of traveling and singing as public performers. The popularity of Bullerengue as dance and song also stems from a history of women's resistances that is now facing challenges as part of the global music industry, as Martina Camargo from Alé Kuma stresses in our interview.

The Pilanderas are the most popular Bullerengue artists. The name comes from their work and the muted rhythms that their labored bodies produced while stomping off rice husks in mortar and pestle barrels large enough for humans to smash sun-dried rice. The festive and witty attitude within the song and dance of the Pilandera women have become more well known as folk dance and music within the Atlantic coast region. Petrona Martinez interprets the dominant rhythms of this music genre in the following lyrics.

*Las Pilanderas*

Llegaron las Pilanderas que van a pila' el arroz (women's voices repeat)  
Quien lo pila no lo come el que lo come esta sentao (women's voices repeat)  
Y yo que lo estoy pilando no me como ni un mordao (women's voices repeat)

*Las Pilanderas*

Here come the Pilanderas who are dehusking the rice (women's voices repeat)  
She dehusks and never eats it, he who eats it always sits (women's voices repeat)  
I, the one who works it, I don't even get a bite. (women's voices repeat)

In this section of the song, the festive and playful nature of the song contradicts the unjust work conditions. Women folklorists have been speaking out and continue to voice their personal and political problems through their own artistic expression. These chanted song tradition, are also significant because they pass along ancestral messages from one generation to the next.

For example, Cantaora Etelvina Maldonado's "Se quema el monte": (Fandango de Lengua), "The pasture burns" (Tongue Fandango) retains a personal memory of her mother who taught her to live a good life and not be troubled by things that die, sooner or later they will return again. "If the pasture burns, let it burn, it will flower again soon." She would say this to her daughter as they collected firewood from Arboletes Antioquia.<sup>16</sup> The double meaning also refers to letting go of any emotional distress some one has caused.

Si se quema el monte  
Déjenlo quemá  
Que la misma cepa vuelve a retoñá.

---

<sup>16</sup> "Alé Kuma Cantaoreas." (2004) [CD] Lines P.E. 3276. www.cdsystems.com. Bogotá.

The message is profound because it projects a deep connection of a mother who embeds a knowing that land does not die, it naturally burns as it helps the next cycle grow stronger. An understanding of the natural world is projected into the words, lives, and actions of folk who understand what it is to live off of the land as they travel and work from one region to another.

*Carmabantúa (Canto Tradicional)*

En las montañas de Loba  
Canta la perdiz jabá  
Ella canta porque quiere  
No porque perdida está.

*Carambantúa (Traditional Chant)*

In the mountains of Loba  
The perdiz jabá sings  
She sings because she wants  
Not because she is lost.

This tradicional chant by Benigna, Etelvina, and Martina chant about the freedom of singing as birds in the high mountain space of land and freedom from oppression. They are not singing a mournful song or a cry for help, they know who they are because singing comes from within. Nature and land throughout all of these folkfeminist texts are a fundamental source of energy that drives feminist resistance.

Etelvina Maldonado (Alé Kuma, 2005) represents the voice of a child in “Why do you hit me?”, a seated Bullerengue, one where dance movement is halted in order to listen the serious topic at hand. The repetitious lament evokes compassion and poignant criticisms against the abusive relationship between mother and child. The lack of communication and understanding perpetuates violence and abuse. This open ended question suggests that there are no acceptable answers or excuses in the eyes of



children. Rather than telling a story of a mother's actions, it makes the listener turn to the child's innocent, humble yet wise defense. Traditional roles of parent and child rarely teach youth to question and correct adult behavior which many times goes accepted and unquestioned because it is a sign of disrespect for authority. The parental voices are silenced. Girls especially grow up fearing authority and lack the courage to change the image of marianismo tradition many times because they cannot trust elders nor have the backing to confront violence in the home. Girls may lack a sincere involvement of a father figure. This void or absence of communication and encouragement limits the confidence of a young woman to question the ways of patriarchy in order to move forward. They have psychological barriers that limit themselves and thwart permission to appropriately engage adults about indifference, passivity, submissiveness, communication voids, loud yelling voices and of course the root of being economically old the patterns of oppression, without hostility, without raising voices, without anger but by asking the right questions and encouraging women to examine how motherhood's anger has adversely affected our families in a machista society where women's liberation is adamantly needed.

*¿Porqué me pegá?" (Bullerengue Sentao)  
Etelvina Maldonado.*

Chorus:

¿Porque me pega?  
¿Porqué me pegá mamita? je...  
¿Porqué me pega madre mía? eh  
¿Porqué me pega mamá? Ia jé  
Si yo a ti no te he hecho nada. Ombé.

¿Porqué me pega, madre mia? Eh  
Madre de mi corazón, ombé. (chorus)

Muchacha e'mi corazón, ombé  
Échame tu tierra encima, ombé  
No me dé tanto pisón. Ombé. (chorus)

(chorus)  
Con ese juete tan duro ombé  
(chorus)

*Why do you hit me? (Seated Bullerengue)*  
*Etelvina Maldonado*

Why do you hit me?  
Why do you hit me mommy, hmm?  
Why do you hit me , my mother, ey?  
Why do you hit me mama, hey?  
I haven't done anything to you.

Why do you hit me mother, ey?  
Mother of my heart, ey?

Mother of my heart, ey.  
Throw your dirt on me, ey

Don't step on me so much, ey  
With that hard toy, ey

In the following lyrics, Totó la Momosina's sings "2 de febrero" where she encourages young women to dance during public religious holidays despite social repression, making these festive moments spaces of feminine pride. This Cumbia represents being a proud young expectant mother that courageously sets aside her inhibitions of being publicly noticed. Although she faces the town gossip and criticism knowing that the young woman's body grows with child, Totó sings "don't be ashamed that your child does not have a father, be proud, put on your dress, don't be a coward because even the Virgin Mary had a child." The chanting chorus of women repeat "when will the virgin get here?" invoking not only an absence of this young women, but also visualizes motherhood as a sacred and natural process. The song connotes that

women who are single mothers and mulatas, face a set of social challenges that involve a feeling of being judged by others by having interracial children out of wedlock. As time goes on, the mother will have happy and beautiful children; a dancing boy and girl more beautiful than any other. The singer projects a healthy attitude for women to have the right and ability to be righteous despite any social oppression.

*2 de febrero*

*Totó la Momposina:*

Noche del 2 de febrero noche de la candelaria  
Una ventana en un lucero un rimon . . . (*undecipherable*)

Mira que el millo no acabe  
Sal muchacha que no calle,  
que todo el pueblo ya sabe,  
que te está creciendo el talle  
y tus senos no te caben  
en tu vestido de calle.  
(chorus)

¡Ay! la candelaria cuando llegará,  
¡Ay! la candelaria cuando llegará,  
cuando llegará cuando llegará?

No temas muchacha ultraje  
por no tener tu hijo padre,  
muchacha ponte tu traje , no sea cobarde,  
muchacha ponte coraje,  
ponte tu traje que hasta la Virgin fue madre.

El tiempo vuela ligero  
y tu estarás orgullosa  
de tener un cambiamero,  
una negrita garbosa,  
detrás ceñizo el pelo,  
pero será más hermosa. (chorus)

*February 2*  
*Totó La Momposina*

Night of the Virgin of candelaria  
there is a window in the light, un rimon . . . (*undecipherable*)

See to it that the milo doesn't stop  
Go out young girl don't stay quiet,  
the town knows that your waist size increases  
and your breast don't fit into your street dress.

(chorus)

Oh, the candelary when will she arrive?  
Oh the canderlay when will she arrive?

Do not fear insults  
because your child has no father,  
put on your dress, do not be a coward,  
put on your courage, put on your dress  
even the Virgin was a mother.

Time will fly by leisurely  
and you will be proud to have a cumbiambero,  
a little black girl. Her hair will be curly,  
but she will be more beautiful. (chorus)

These personal anecdotes are matriarchal voices that speak to the wisdom passed along from one generation to the next, like in "Se quema el monte," the unfair working conditions of pilandera women, the importance to examine the effects of these frustrations of motherhood, and the courage that it takes to be proud women as dancing subjects. The interpretive analysis here are one layer of information that essential in understanding the dialectic of personal and political as counterhegemonic workings of folkfeminist practices in the third world. In essence, chanted song and dance of Cantoras represent the attitudes and potential of dance and song as solidarity among women. These women pull together in order resist the pressures of society, other wise our everyday lives become confining, redundant and apathetic amidst an already

unequal conditions, thus we run risk of caving in to the limited economic resources, freedom within public and private spaces, the dispirited attitude of indifference and the lack of ambition. The following journal reflects the worsening post carnival depression I experienced while living in Barranquilla and what happened later as a result.

*February 2004*

I sit at my laptop, half-dazed from the hot and humid weather, sun-drowsed, no air conditioning, while the fan spins full blast lulling me to sleep. Lazy, some might call it that, but the sun demands turtle speed. I can hardly absorb the details whilst downloading them into American words, which presently seems as natural as getting liposuction. My lips barely move as I sit in a meditative trance reaching to write, my pen dries and the tip of the pencil breaks because of the painful reality of watching the layers of my future shed in exchange for waiting for nothing to happen in a passive living situation. My watch and calendar sink to the bottom of my abysmal bag as I grow eyes in the back of my head, I tight-grip my purse and I'm as defensive as a roly-poly. If you touch me, I immediately wad up into a little ball into a corner of my imagination. I too like to hide behind my sunglasses and headphones pretending to ignore the lustful comments as I block them off with machine gun fists in my mouth.

The loose caramel color dirt gets stuck underneath my nails, my toes and on my cheekbones even if I decide not to go anywhere for the day. I learn to live with ants invading the countertop, sugar jar, or even my toothbrush. Windy season is about to trade off with rainy season and I'll get used to the arroyos again, flooded streets that paralyze the town. It's a good excuse to not go anywhere. I try to stay inside when it rains, getting my feet wet ruining a good pair of leather shoes or catching a cold from

the air conditioning needs to have a good reason, no one here has thought of one yet. The environment and weather seems to be resenting how I have gorged on its fruits. I blend in and look like locals so it's safe going outside for leisure. I collect fallen flowers and fruits as I walk under the mango tree for shade, search for fallen nisperos that have not split open from the fall and avoid falling coconuts and ankle-twisting sidewalk cracks during wind storms. I have a routine now. I walk to Parque Venezuela everyday in the evening cherishing the little people that laugh and play, so I too ride the bumper cars laughing out loud at how off guard I can hit little kids, aggressiveness and play. For dinner I normally go eat a tutti fruity "on the routy" at the fruit stand (and can never manage to get Chuck Berry's soulful tune out of my head). Before going to bed, I walk over to the bakery on the corner for tomorrow's breakfast. I am normal now.

Today my hands are tied to the Clorox and Pinesol. I might spend the morning bleaching whites, folding clothes, cleaning my room, living way under my means (without the four C's, no car, no credit card, no cable and no cellphone). I am getting quite efficient at hanging clothes with pins on the clothesline every morning and admiring how the sun dries them to perfection. I enjoy buying beautifully ripened fruits and blending them with the perfect amount of sugar and milk. Life is slow and simple now. I know I will eventually go home, so I suck it up and move with the pace of life. I stay in silence for weeks and let my ideas and inspirations flow. I have started to hide because of the monotony, getting hissed at, looked at, and I even stop dancing for awhile after Carnival. If carnival is the climax, then I just ran a marathon, I had to sort of ignore my project so that I would not burn out, who trains for a marathon right after a

run? I gain some strength replenishing in temporary hibernation. I am ready to get out of here so I go to Cartagena a few weeks to see if I can get my spark back.

### Cantoara Martina Camargo

Cartagena looks over the Atlantic Ocean. The tourist town also has an air of postcolonial remnants in the Zona Colonial. The Fort of San Felipe overlooks the ocean. This was the global city of Latin America and Europe. Slave trade was legal in only two cities at this time, Cartagena de Indias and Veracruz Mexico during the 1600's. It is approximately 1 hour west of Barranquilla. I am thrilled to pass by the India Catalina's bronze statue as she stands upright and tall in the center of the boulevard. Her long braids and one perfect feather touches on a familiar, daring and proud past. Hands at her side, legs firmly clenched together, barefoot and open-chested, she is the radical matriarchal figure I need right now, one whose free body makes me sigh at how much time we spend masking our bodies with overpriced stitched cloth. This heroine reminds me of indigenous integrity and presence as her extreme mythic persona has been known to enforce virtuous behavior among her men,<sup>17</sup> outweighing any stereotype of a subservient indigenous society.

The taxi cab dropped me off on the beach in Boca Grande, Big Mouth, where most hotels are located about ten minutes from the colonial district. The desolate beach is a usual backdrop during low season. I need a place to stay and a random person recommended the hotel el Colonial. I bargained with the owner and stayed for 30 bucks

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<sup>17</sup> Catalina did not have tolerance for lying and especially infidelity. She is known for castrating men if they disrespected her.

a night. It was on the 16th floor and I could hardly believe the only thing between me and the Atlantic Ocean sunset were salt corroded windows shielding me from the gusty winds.

The next morning I went into the old city looking for the library, University of Cartagena and Biblioteca Bartolome de las Casas. They were both closed for 3 days, so I wandered the streets and noticed a post post-colonialism. No women with hoop skirts and peach laced umbrellas were gliding with gentlemen through the cobbled streets just like Marquez' Love in the Time of Cólera. On the fourth day, I found ghostly books that belonged more to Melquiades from One hundred Years of Solitude than U of C's library. The taken for granted privilege of being the first to crack open the latest editions of Colombian books quickly subsided. The books shone like sparkling diamonds at the Graduate college, which made this research tale a bit more ironic and pressing. My already lame-like meandering became an empowered promenade as I escorted myself up and down the ankle twisting cobbled stone streets, imagining I had somewhere to go. I followed the honking sound of the ice cone man leading up to one of my favorite plazas, thanks to him. It has life size statues of boys chasing girls. My pressed for time attitude faded only after 10 minutes even though I only had two days left by now. I caught a glimpse of a parish, home of Saint Pedro Claver, known as slave of the slaves (1580-1654), I always tend to steer clear of any Catholic tourist traps especially after my trip to cathedral Mecca in Spain. I did the right thing to avoid giving myself a guilt trip and went in anyway. I read the sign a bit closer this time to see what they were selling it said "Centro Cultural Afro-Colombiano." Of course! I finally got a break. I had no clue who Claver was at the time but this makes perfect sense. I caved in and



bought the Claver book as an excuse to tip toe past the beautiful palm rock garden and up the wide chunks of cobble stone stairs, no religious gatekeepers here anymore. Louis Jaime, the tamborero (drummer) studies ethnomusicology and is a young man that studies Tambora music (Fuentes, 2003). Talk to Martina, he says after I tell him about the purpose of my folkloric journey. We call her and I go see her first thing the following day. She is Cantaora of Aires de San Martin and Alé Kuma.

Martina immediately greets me on her front patio. Her petite body has a gypsy flare, and her gentle voice and friendly disposition makes our spontaneous acquaintance comfortable. Martina's living room is a wide open space for rehearsals and the periphery is adored with emblematic Atlantic coast art, the bodegones of tropical fruits are always the central theme on the main wall. We sit in her back living room, and her husband greets me. Martina sways in her rustic rocking chair. The hammock peeks out at us in the backyard. The other rooms are sealed off by curtains, and the adjacent bookcase wall is jam packed with the families' books and CD collections. Her talking voice is sweet, yet her singing voice is like a piercing jolt of Caribbean art. Her town, southeast of Mompós, where Totó la Momposina is from, is just a boga's length<sup>18</sup> away by way of the Magdalene River. She unpacks an alarming set of truths about folklore between those who make tradition and those who exploit.

*Interview April 2004*

Deisy: (*I specifically direct the question to Martina*) Would you consider folkdance and folk music an expression of feminism?

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<sup>18</sup> Boga's were the rafts that were used for transportation mainly navigated by Africans. Many African and Indigenous traditions were maintained and practiced just off the coast of the Magdalene river as in the case of the conservation of indigenous irrigation system of Cienaga's of Mompós and San martin de Loba which are located on the southern end of the Atlantic Department.

Husband: (*agitated*) If you are a folklorist, you should not have to go and work a different job. They should not to drag folklore across the floor like they do today. The mapalé from before, it was so beautiful! And now women are nude, there are many tourists here in Cartagena and in Barranquilla so they have to change it for tourists that like to see nude women. The companies are just trying to get the dollars, you understand? We were watching Cumbia Soledaña and the woman's butt was hanging out, do you remember Martina? She was a beautiful girl but when she turned around you could see her underwear. In the past you would have never seen that, never, not even the ankle. As folklore we should say it is tradition, but we also need to change it to make it more modern. We had a Congo group called Calenda, they dance Mapalé and Calenda. I noticed a reporter from Pereira drawing the traditions of Congo and I said to her "don't draw that because that is not Congo." She said, "if they are not original, why did they let them in the festival?" See, that is why we have to invite the best groups of Cartagena to the festival. But I can't tell the groups to do this and don't do that.

Deisy: Martina what do you think?

Martina: It is the organizer's mistake because if you invite someone you have to say, we want tradition.

Husband: (Passionate and incomprehensible)

Martina: Our group is called Alé Kuma, it has a piano, base, and drums. But they say they want us to sing traditional and for that they can invite the group that I direct called Aires de San Martin. It is traditional, not that traditional but it makes tradition. Ale Kuma has traditional instruments.

Deisy: Do you think you have struggles that are different from other types of music?

Husband: Yes.

Martina: Yes.

Husband: Well here in Cartagena.

Deisy: Could you please answer that question, Martina?

Martina: What is the struggle? I think the struggle between men and women are different as well. In the case of tambora, this is not easy, music is not easy. Especially for folklore music because it isn't perceived or felt the way it should be perceived and felt. It's considered less than below the shoulders "debajo del hombro." Like something that doesn't mean anything, so here in Cartagena you

can see it. If I go with my group to a concert they don't respond, they simply do not respond, like it is not important.

Deisy: How do you know? What do you mean?

Martina: Because I see it and feel it. Maybe they have not been conscious about our values, what our music is, what our identity is, our culture, they have not been aware. But we hear foreign music before anything else. At the festival Iberamericano, we were supposed to play and they said they didn't have any money for music groups. But I saw a commercial where they were inviting musicians from other places, singers. These groups don't come just because they want to, they come for money. And those of us who are from here, we are making our own music, we want to be recognized and identified. Why can't they let us participate in a festival? That surprises me and disappoints me that foreign groups have a better following in this country than our own groups. We haven't had the opportunity to leave this country, Colombia, but I hope that we will have that opportunity.

They have told me that Alé Kuma has been seen abroad through our CD's. Here is another story, a guy from Cali, we were at a festival February 26. They made a documentary of Alé Kuma singers. He said a friend of his had arrived from Paris and his friend said "look at the music I brought you back from Paris." And he looks at all of the albums and he randomly picks out Alé Kuma. The guy from Cali says "I listened to it and it made such an impact that I had to burn it, please excuse me Martina but I had to burn it. I have it burned. I asked here in Cali if they had any. But who? No one, no one, no one." It is so contradictory that they brought it back from Paris while we are right here in Colombia. That's a huge contradiction Paris! He says "I was looking for someone to tell me something about this group Alé Kuma, and no one could tell me anything." That is a big contradiction. Being here from Colombia, they had to bring our music in from abroad. We come from these little towns and no one notices us here.

Deisy: How did you get involved in Alé Kuma?

Martina: First I had the opportunity to leave my town and organize with my husband. If I had stayed in San Martin, I would not have recorded Alé Kuma I also recorded something with the Minister of Culture. Louis Jaime became very interested in me. I went to the national festival of folklore in Ibagué. Leonardo Gomez had a project about Alé Kuma, he was looking for cantoras (singers). He went to the festival; he liked it and went from Bogota to Ibagué just to see me. He asked if I wanted to take part and I said yes. I didn't sing bullerengue but I tried. It was a bit difficult because it isn't my strong point but I did it anyway. He gave me the music. And then he said if it weren't for me, Alé Kuma wouldn't have happened; I was very interested in making this happen. He tells me, let's do it to see what happens. In Ibagué they defend traditional music, pure

music, and I also defend traditional music because that is what I do, I was able to find a way so that Tambora would be heard. That was the role that I played and that wasn't easy. Being a cantaora is not easy. Leaving my town was not easy either. People like what I do, in my town the people like what I do, many people. But there are some that do not like it. There is always rivalry. Guillermo Carbó from the CD el Baile Cantado en Colombia wanted to do an interview for Caracol, He said to me "Martina, you have the most recognition for this music." Although I do not have economic recognition. I have been in Rioacha, Buenaventura, Quibdó, Cali, Medellin, Bogotá, in May I am going to Valledupar, Santa Marta, Pasto, Santo Cayman.

Deisy: Do you feel you have been successful?

Martina: I am successful when my music is recognized through Alé Kuma. That is the success. Success is not being great cantaora, no, success for me is having tambora music is known. For me, that is success.

Deisy: And when you travel?

Martina: It is difficult to move us, from Pacific to the Atlantic, the Andes and the tickets are costly, I travel alone. And Nataly my daughter also interprets with me and does chorus when she can. My husband understands all of this more than me at times, because he manages and knows that it is a strict business.

I mentioned in the documentary that women here strongly criticize cantaoras because we leave our homes and family. What they don't understand is that we want for our music to be heard. We don't need to be the ones that are washing, cooking and ironing. We have important things to do in this lifetime. I admire Manuel, he is not machista he leaves me in peace. He stays with the girls, he collaborates when my drums need to be put away, the flowers, the dress, the suitcase. He supports me and I admire him for that. And some people think, "who knows what your husband is doing while you are away." I am like "Por Dios!" "By God."

Something sad happened to me. They invited me and the group (not living here in Cartagena but in San Martin). to Cordoba for a national cultural week, I don't know how the rumors got started but we were very successful that night, not one more soul could fit in the place and it was paid entry. I was exhausted when we left tired. I made the mistake of asking my older aunt if she was tired. "If you are tired I'll tell the organizers to treat you well and take you home." Later that evening they invited me to a dinner because I the group director. The others were invited to another house for a parranda (party). After I ate I was going to come back. When I gave my back she said, "what she wants to do is go roll around with the machos." However, I did not hear her say that. When I came back the girls told me. I said "no, don't worry." We took care of this problem when we arrived home.

Deisy : Did you talk to your aunt?

No, I told my father. I went to the assessment meeting and I told my father. He said she wouldn't be able to participate anymore. It is very sad. Only Etelvina and I go now. We are the only women. I am the youngest. They love and respect us very much here. We are respected. They hug me at times to show their support, "you did well Martina" and you feel support.

Deisy: You are a cantaora, but some people might think that you dance or play drums because Tambora music is called chanted dance (baile cantao).

Martina: I sing, interpret tradition and dance Chandé, la Guacherna, el Berroche, and now Tambora. I interpret. Tambora is a dance and a song, not only an instrument, but it is a rhythm that is sung and danced. The instruments are tamboras with two leather patches, both sides currulao. They call it tambor alegre in the north. We call it tambora or currulao. We use clapping palms and free style voice with a chorus and a pair of dancers. The tambora is never danced with several pairs of dancers like in Cumbia. You dance alone. If you are in the center of the circle and there is a woman, the woman leaves the circle and another one enters. But it is never with many pairs. It's a circle where women come in and out. It is a real blast. You feel like you are in another world, in what is your own.

Deisy: Spiritual?

Martina: Yes, you don't get tired. To dance barefoot on the beach, step all over it, the sand. While you are in the moment, your feet do not hurt. The next day though, you'll wake up with blisters. The passion during those moment is always there.

Deisy: We'll see if I can come here you sing soon. Maybe I can come back after Easter.

Martina: I rehearse here in the living room.

Deisy: Who are your favorite singers?

Martina: Well, Etelvina Maldonado, Totó and Petrona Martinez.

After the interview, we spoke about her CD, they gave me their last demo of Alé Kuma, and I bought her Tambora CD, too. This interview hits home because Martina finds success in sharing her music but struggles as an artist both socially and financially

while women compromise her integrity. The solidarity among women in Martina's family slowly and sadly crumbles, limiting the female support needed when touring abroad. Martina's goal in having her music known has been a family tradition, passed down from her father and now her daughter also sings with Martina's group. Foreign producers are able to market her music globally, making her music more popular abroad than in Colombia. She is more frustrated with not getting local recognition, whereas recording companies have already come to take traditional music to the global market. Colombians are not embracing folklore traditions, because according to Martina, the organizer's are not concerned with tradition, they are more concerned with selling out venues by including other regional popular groups that are not from the area. The frustration they feel regarding lack of solidarity with commercialized festivals reflects the personal struggles and artistic expression as a form of resistance. The economic inequality and exploitation they are living is inextricably linked to the powers of consumer capital. However, the response to these problems are in the lessons learned in her songs, ones tied to life lessons nature, one that she knows well in her songs where she defends practices and creates traditions where the natural world comforts the human condition within the personifications of land, sea and sky. She sang parts of her two favorite songs that day, saying that her father had composed "Las olas de la mar" (2004), which she sings with Alé Kuma. "Aguilas del Monte" (2003) is also one that she enjoys singing for her group Aires de San Martin. I did not have to opportunity to make it back for Easter weekend. I know I'll be back someday to experience an authentic form of spontaneous performance that follows tradition. This made my trip to Cartagena worthwhile.

*Aguila del Monte*

(chorus)

Aguila del monte aguila será se le oye en las voces como el pavo real  
se le oye en las voces como el pavo real.

Cada vez que voy al mar se me presentan mis penas  
de ver la profundidad dónde mi amante navega.

(chorus)

Se pusieron a cantar a las cinco de la mañana,  
el pasmin y el pavo real en el clarín de las montañas

(chorus)

Alondra que tanto cantas y que remedas un jilgero  
dime por cuanto cantas a mi y mis compañeros.

(chorus)

Alondra que vas volando recorriendo todos los espacios  
con tu pico recogiendo el rocío enmascarado.

(chorus)

En mi corazón te tengo que te saque el que quisiera  
veremos después de Dios cual es el que se atreve.

(chorus)

Cada vez que voy al mar se me presentan mis penas  
a ver la profundidad donde mi amante navega.

*Eagle of the Countryside*

*Martina Camargo*

Eagle of the countryside, eagle it must be,  
you can hear it in the voices like the peacock,

Each time I go to the sea, my sadnesses appears  
to see the profoundness of where my love one navigates.

They began to sing at 5 in the morning,  
el pasmin and the peacock in the clearness of the mountains.

Skylark you sing so much and you imitate a goldfinch  
tell me how much you'll sing for me and my friends

Skylark you sing traveling to every space  
with your mask-like beak scooping up the dew

I have you in my heart, who ever wants to take you from me  
will first have to hear from God.

Each time I go to the sea, my sadnesses appear  
to see the profoundness of where my lover navigates.

The song represents the freedom of birds and the vastness of the ocean where the unknown produces sadness. The peacock, most confident and noble of birds begins its day early. The eagle or mountain skylark, represents hope and grandeur where even the peacock acknowledges its presence. The ocean holds a secret within the vast horizon of water where loved ones hold their journey. He speaks to the birds as they are personified into having an understanding of freedom and happiness as he continues to contemplate a missing loved-one; a God-given bond.

*Las Olas de la Mar*  
*Martina Camargo*

Tus padres te han dicho que no hables conmigo,  
la mar, las olas del mar,  
Los montes no tienen llave,  
Ni murallas los caminos, La mar.

Palomita yarumera  
Lléveme a tu comedero. La mar  
He sabido que estás sola  
Quiero ser tu compañero. La mar.

Ay señores ¿cómo hare  
Pa'cogerme esta paloma? La mar.  
Llega a la trampa y se asoma,  
Pero no quiere caer. La mar.

Tu fuiste la que pusiste  
Tu cara sobre la mia, la mar,  
Y llorando me dijiste  
Que jamás me olvidarías. La mar.



Yo quisiera ser la brisa  
Para batir tus cabellos. La mar,  
Y meterme dentro de ellos  
Para escuchar tu sonrisa. La mar.

Panderito retiraló,  
Recogelo con la mano, la mar,  
Le lo le..fuego pandero  
Recogelo con la mano, la mar,  
Las olas de la mar.

*The ocean*  
*Martina Camargo*

Your parents have told you not to talk to me,  
ocean, the waves of the ocean  
The countryside has no keys  
and the paths do not have walls, the ocean.

Yarumera Dove  
Take me to your dining area, ocean.

I have known that you are alone  
I want to be your companion, ocean.

Oh, my people, what can I do to grab that dove?, the ocean  
she goes into the trap and peeks  
but she will not fall, the ocean.

You are the one that put  
your face in front of mine, ocean.  
crying you told me  
that you would never forget me, ocean.

I would like to be the wind  
to stroke your hair, ocean,  
and go deep inside  
to hear your smile, ocean.

panderito take it away  
pick it up with your hand, ocean  
le, lo , le fire pandero  
pick it up with your hand, ocean  
the waves of the ocean.

The author's interpretation, in this case Martina's father Cayetano Camargo, uses nature to create double meaning, referring to the ocean as feminine strength. The dangers and freedoms of the ocean know no boundaries and the land is limitless. The dove and the ocean personified as women seem to live in solitude. The game of human nature is a playful dance between a man and woman. The man wants to take her to be his own, that which is lovely and free but not his to own. The Dove is flirty, strong, and does not easily fall. He blames the ocean for teasing him and yet the ocean is unresponsive to his needs. He desires to know women's secrets, as they are as mysterious as the ocean. Women hold strength in beauty, forceful like the wind and they are also able to experience happiness, as we hear the oceans' smile. Man's desire for women is not an easy endeavor because the author warns that the freedom women have are like the ocean waters, if you try to hold onto them, women are like waves and fire, impossible to catch.

#### Meeting Esther Forero

Esthercita's story is one of my favorites partly because my cousin Pao and my mom would randomly and lovingly sing it out loud . . . "La luna de Barranquilla tiene una cosa que maravilla . . .", she struggled to have a Guacherna carnival and she has a bronze statue, she is already a legend in this town (Figure 12).



*Figure 12. Esther, statue, and moon.*

When I met Alfonso, president of Carnival S.A. the corporate leader of carnival, he immediately called her up for me. I have to confess that setting up times to meet was frustrating. She was sick everyday I wanted to confirm our meeting. On both occasions, trying to be as patient as possible, I had to wait the day before my departure. This is what happened the first time we spoke.

*Fieldnotes October 15, 2003*

“Can I please speak with Mrs Forero?”

The maid asked, “Who is this?”

I gave her a quick answer, and she responded “Mrs. Forero is very sick, she caught pneumonia in Bogotá and she fell into a deep depression.”

“What happened? Didn’t she go to Miami, they held an award ceremony in her honor.”

“Well, they denied her visa, even though she has a special invitation, and an all expense paid trip, they denied her visa because of her income here in Barranquilla.”

I spoke with Esthercita on several occasions, but she always responded she was too sick or too tired. At 80 or 90 something, I was trying to be respectful and prudent,

she was rock star status here in Barranquilla. I felt I was a burden calling and calling and then being let down, this became a habit, after all I am not local press, nor do I have any affiliations with the music industry, I wanted to get through the layers of this music industry and meet her. I finally contacted her manager.

“Oh, Esthercita is very busy; she is promoting her new songs and her new CD.”

I was quite amazed that she still has the energy and passion to write, sing and handle the promotion, maybe this is why she was so sick and tired. I tried to interview her for nearly 11 months but she was just too busy or too tired. My status as a U of I student from Chicago was not suitable for now. As time passed, I had the opportunity to be around for La Guacherna, her trademark parade.

*Field notes February 6*

The night of Guacherna, my friend Mau and I take a bus down to Estelita's park. At the plaza, boys stand around laughing and girls sit on benches waiting for something to take place. Being dressed in Cumbia outfits reemphasizes their ability in calling upon the opposite sex: “tssss,tssss, ven, para adonde vas, yo te llevo . . . Adiiiooss mamita.” These below the breath come ons or terms of endearment, learned from generations of men chasing-women, was a teasing energy all amassed on the streets of Barranquilla.

Shrilling whistles, wailing laughter in the background penetrates pedestrian gazes. Groups of girls go past, couples hand in hand dressed in uniform to assure others of an intimate attachment, matching Hawaiian shirts, pants or vueltaio hats. Vendors flood the streets selling mangos, water, kabobs, festive porcelain Marimonda necklaces, lit up passa- fires, beer, arepas, and fried food lined the street corners. Water fights break out around every 100 feet. I finally get down to business and take out my camera

that I stashed in my purse. The layers of people block any kind of view of the night parade. Mau puts me on his shoulders but so many heads are blocking my view. There is simply not enough space; the impassable crowd and steel gates border the parade route. A mule stands beside us, patiently, as though waiting for someone. We continue walking back and forth, watching people waiting to be watched; so much waiting. Unfortunately a group of prostitutes, appearing to 15 or 16 years old were linger on the corners, policemen stand around flirting with interested ladies, the smell of economic suffering line the streets. Vendors sell shirts, masks, fluorescent toys; instant visual gratification and participation guaranteed. This is Esthercita's parade, la Guacherna? That mule seems so laid back with so many people crowding around it. I just arrived in Barranquilla yesterday, after coming back from Chicago's five inch snow storm, so I am both anxious to be part of the "el quien lo vive lo goza" group. But I am in cultural adjustment period, getting used to the dusty winds and smell of tropical bamboo wafts of fresh jungle roots that fill my lungs.

So now, June 3, I only have a few days left before going back to Chicago. Esthercita must be over her depression and I am confident she will give me a few minutes to talk. I finally had the opportunity to speak with Mrs. Forero, called "la novia de Barranquilla," "Barranquilla's girlfriend." I had gone past her statue so many times now, wondering if she was really all that vain as people claimed her to be, if she was difficult or moody, or if all that was just a protective layer she had built over the years?

"How long are we going to take" she demanded.

"Are you going to film me?"

"No, just a taped interview."

“What is this all about anyway? One hour, that is too much, how bout a half an hour?”

I said “Mrs. Forero, this interview is very important for me, it represents women’s identities, struggles and triumphs.”

“Struggles, luchas, I have not ever had luchas, everything in my life has always been planned.”

“I see, well I’d like to talk about your life as a composer and singer.”

“Okay, well call me on Tuesday to remind me again, 11 on Wednesday right?”

I was a bit skeptical, she was not very enthusiastic. I was nervous that she would shrug me off of her world of music, but most of all I was looking for a meaningful interaction, some kind of hope after so many let downs.

I tried looking professional, serious. The taxi cab let me off on the corner of an extremely narrow street. You could hear the neighbor’s cumbia and the smell of sancocho soup. The dog greeted me as I wiped the tropical sweat from my forehead. The wall to the left was filled with plaques and trophies. An oil on canvas of Esthercita adorned the front wall.

“I will be with you in a second dear, have a seat,” and she pointed to the seat farthest away.

The maid sat listening on the side. Esthercita was in her night gown, she was not wearing any make up, and she reminded me of my grandmother.

“I’m going to sit closer to you, if that is okay, I want to make sure my tape recorder doesn’t miss anything.” So, we sat nearly knee to knee as I listened to stories I already heard from other people and listened to her vision of the world.

Deisy: What is your opinion about women's role in Colombia?

Esther: Different ways, no. Every one has their respective paths. In general, youth are achieving good positions in business and culturally it also developing well. I think we are on a good path.

Deisy: What are some changes that you have seen with respect to folklore, with music?

Esther: Lately the changes have been profound. We have worked hard with our folklore especially recording it like our Cumbia rhythm that is very important. There has been a imposed wave of promoting foreign music and this has caused folklore music to be set to one side. I am referring to pop rock and the electronic music. We all know that folklore is from the pueblo, a popular expression so there is a deep rooted change that is going on.

Deisy: So folklore is being pushed to one side?

Esther: Yes, yes, yes, not only us here in Barranquilla but in all of Latin America and perhaps in the entire world. Like all new style, this happens. This doesn't have to happen because people cannot forget about their truth, their tradition. They are very important for the mentality of a country.

Deisy: Your CD is an international one?

Esther: Yes, of course. The last song I wrote is about a profound pain and worry about how negative publicity has been for Colombia lately. In the exterior they say it is terrible, a dangerous country, do not travel there. (she laughs). When Colombians travel they are received with hesitation, that song is a response to that. We have to become international because it is the only way to tell the truth about Colombia. We are not bad people.

Deisy: Why did you begin writing folklore?

Esther: I started to sing when I was 14. I sang popular songs on the radio. I didn't have any culture. All of a sudden certain people came into my life, like Jorge Artel, who told me not to only sing because I had a strong artistic character. He encouraged me to sing songs about the land and I began writing about our land. I paid attention to this and began to research this on my own. I began listening and came to love these things. In 1950 there was an important world tour to spread the Caribbean music. I went to Puerto Rico and was fortunate to meet the great composer Rafael Hernandez. I had already written a song in Santo Domingo called Santo Domingo. Rafael recorded it and I performed it with his orchestra. His wife loved me very much and I lived with them for awhile, I continued recording. My professional career began in Puerto

Rico. I noticed that Rafael was an idol in Puerto Rico and began to notice why, because of the songs he wrote about for his pueblo, for his land, love of his land, it stayed with me. When I left Puerto Rico he said "Esther, write music. That is your path" I said, "maestro, I am not a musician, I don't know about this" He said "It doesn't matter, that is why we have people to arrange the music." He left a mark. I began to write little songs, like the ones I had written in Puerto Rico. I went to New York by myself. I began to write and record songs that my mother had taught me when I was a little girl. I began to think about the land and country. That is why I came back to Barranquilla, to love it. I began to notice that Barranquillan's did not feel love for this city, only foreigners. Because of the ports we are subject to many influences, Cuban music this that and the other. I began to write an album "Once upon a time in la arenosa." The songs tell the history of the city. It holds onto all of the love for the city, of its people and for Barranquilla. They are proud to have been born in this land. Barranquilla is marvelous place.

Deisy: What is it like to be named "Barranquilla's girlfriend"?

Esther: I haven't paid much attention to that. But I do receive it as a form of love from the city. They love me very much. Gustavo Hernando used that term because of the songs I had written.

Deisy: What would you like to see for women in the future?

Esther: I am already seeing it. We succeeded by having the Barranquillan people take a look back at the country. I was able to travel the world and have the "Barranquillan moon" be looked at with nostalgia and love, to know it and struggle for it. Before I cross over to the other world, I will move on satisfied because I achieved what I wanted for my city, to love her, know her, struggle for her, to serve her. We need so much more, we are a Latin American country subject to many influences and dramas.

Deisy: Did you have any obstacles in starting La Guacherna?

Esther: Of course, La Guacherna started as little groups of about 8-10 people who would go out in Barrio Abajo where I was born and raised. During carnival they would be all over the place with a lamp, a stick and red handkerchief drinking alcohol. So the Guacherna was born, a complete unorganized social celebration. That disappeared and I forgot about it. When I was in Santiago de Cuba for Carnival, I experienced La Conga, a popular festival of crazy lights and all of that. I looked for a folklorist the next day. I joined in and danced until five in the morning. I spoke with the folklorist and asked him about the Conga and he described La Guacherna. They were small groups who carried lanterns etc. it was exactly the same but those groups did not disappear. They began to grow over there. They incorporated themselves into the Santiago Carnival and



that became a spectacle that looked like a river of people. I said to myself “He just described the Guacherna, either we took it there or they brought it here but they are like brothers. “I am going to do this in Barranquilla” I said. “To give Carnival a nocturnal spectacle, filled with fantasy of colors, moon and wind that we have that is extraordinary during that time period. I waited 14 years visiting Carnival Presidents. “What a nice idea” they would say without doing anything, until they nominated Ernesto Mclausan. He accepted and encouraged my idea and talked to the queens’ fathers. They Guacherna began in 1974. During our interview she recited her song for me, “Friend from any part of the world.”

Amigo de cualquier lugar del mundo  
Si te han dicho que Colombia morirá  
Que se apaga entre naufragios y entre espantos  
Entre sangre y entre llanto y que hay gente que se va  
Amigo de cualquier lugar del mundo  
Te digo que no es cierto, no es verdad  
Que a pesar de tantos odios y arrópelas  
Tantas luchas y tantas penas  
Todavía en mi tierra surgen rosas  
Todavía un rondal de mariposas  
Todavía el sentimiento y la poesía  
Todavía una oración en cada día  
Todavía los caminos de esperanza,  
y sonar con rosadas primaveras  
(tape cuts off)  
Amigo, si te han dicho que Colombia acabara  
Te juro que no es cierto  
Esa no es la realidad  
Porque algún día las campanas del amor repicaran  
Y Dios enviara un lucero  
Que a mi patria alumbrara

The magic did not begin until I turned off the tape recorder and we started to interact on an informal level after she recited her song.

“Esthercita”, I said off the record, “have you thought about explicitly writing anything about racial tensions. How do you see the situation?”

“A ha, just a couple of days ago I was thinking about doing just that! What a coincidence! Remember Nidia,” she asked her maid, “I was talking to you about that?”

“Yes”, she responded from the kitchen.

Have you ever heard of a Puerto Rican poet by the name of Matos, oh let me read you some of his things. He was a good friend of mine.

So we sat and shared ideas, exchanged phone numbers and addresses.

“Doesn’t she remind you of someone, she asked her daughter who has come for lunch.”

“You know my mom used to talk about you back in Illinois, I have wanted to meet you for some time.”

Doesn’t she remind you of someone?” said Esthercita. She waited a second before giving away the answer. You remind me of my granddaughter. She seemed to not want me to leave, and I wanted to stay longer; to learn. I felt old and she was young, time was irrelevant. We sat for 2 hours, as I listened and we laughed and cried a bit. She was like my grandmother, and I was like her granddaughter, two strangers making a connection that was always already there to begin with, I just needed to prove it for myself. Maybe she saw that I was harmless, not out to exploit her or make any money, I have my own agenda, obligation and responsibility of course as a preliminary research project, but more importantly I want to make sure that for the record, we have not forgotten a solidarity among women and that my contribution is to share her message to anyone who wants to listen.

“Can I take a picture of the both of us?”

“Right now? I look terrible!” her vanity set in but quickly subsided.

“It’s okay, it’s just for me, I’ll erase it anyway if you don’t like it.” I snap the picture with my left hand. She had no makeup, nothing fancy, it was just her.

“Oh, yes, you take good pictures, that is very good.”

I asked her about Jorge Artel. She avoided the question

The last time I went by Esthercita's statue in the park during the 2004 trip, was the day before I left, the orange sun was setting on the city. I was tearing open the crown of a tree-ripened mango, tasting the true color of greenness. A feeling of fulfillment and closure washed over my body. I know I will see her again. This is her message and song, "Friend from any part of the world" that I that I translated for the purposes of getting her message out.

*Friend From any Part of the World*

Friend from any part of the world  
if they have told you that Colombia will die  
that it shuts off among storms and scares  
within blood and cries and that people leave,  
Friend from any part of the world  
I tell you that it is not true  
Even through all of the hate and arropelas  
so many struggles and sadness  
in this land we still have roses  
a round of butterflies  
we still have feeling and poetry  
a prayer every day  
we still have paths of hope  
and we dream of a pink springtime  
(tape cuts off)  
Friend, if they tell you that Colombia will end  
I swear it is not true  
because one day the bells of love will ring  
and God will send a light  
that will shine on my country.

*Fieldnotes May 2008*

The taxi drops me off at the iron gates blocking off Esther's house. Guards check invitations and I am quickly rejected, I only heard this from a friend that the District Band was serenading Esther that night. I have the habit of not taking no for

answer so I jotted down my purpose on a piece of paper. The guard took it to her manager and after 15 minutes I entered and enjoyed the music as we all stood waiting for Esther's grand entrance, or rather she was coming out of the privacy of her home and out into the public with guards at her side. She had significantly aged since our last interview and I caught a few pictures with my cell since my camera had been stolen the previous day. Some of us danced to her music, teen-agers walked around. I stood next to a little girl as I ate a Bon Bon Bum I had stashed in my purse, my aunt Monica brought it as a gift in the States. Standing on a dirt hill, I could somewhat see the top of her head, I had no ambition to squirm my way in through the crowd because the crowds here are dangerously chaotic. I felt fortunate and savored the mellow experience as something I would probably never do again. I wish I could say it was not as stressful this time around.

It was the day before my departure, and Esther had put me off for 2 weeks now. We had scheduled an interview for 1:00 p.m. I called to confirm at 11:30, and her maid said she was sleeping and felt very ill. I imprudently showed up on her doorstep this time, ready for rejection again. It was raining and the maid answered the door.

"I'm sorry, Esthercita is not feeling well and cannot see anyone right now."

"But I set up an interview with her for 1:00 p.m."

"Did you call her in advance before coming?" she replied.

I patiently stated my purpose once more, blocked any emotion or related feeling of being rejected or going unnoticed, especially by her. None of it made sense to me anymore. Imposing myself on others is far from how women here are suppose to behave. Does the journey and the effort of going to these lengths validate my research?

Have I been trained to be an annoying first world researcher tying up loose ends? Who is this aggressive person making these demands that no one cares about except me? It's only one piece of the big picture anyway.

"I am here to follow up on some research. I am a student from the University of Illinois. and I want to talk to her about her struggles and successes as a woman in folklore." I could have given up and walked away, but then my emotions took over and I broke down and cried as usual when I do not get my way. These tears were real.

"One moment" she closed the door and opened it again. "She'll see you, but she has to get ready first, it will be like 10 minutes."

"Okay" as I wiped my tears and gathered my composure just so she could get in her last word and I could finish this chapter. Our conversation, given the circumstances was awkward and abrupt. I apologized for my inconvenience and proceeded with taping the interview.

Deisy: What do you consider your greatest contribution to this society?

Esther: My songs about Barranquilla.

Deisy: What would you like to give to all of the women here?

Esther: To love the land as if it were their own mother. To feel it, to defend it. To always feel concerned about it because Barranquilla needs it.

Deisy: What does any woman need to be able to give back to the society?

Esther: A poet. He was a great friend. He planted that love. It is simple but very profound. Love it. A poet influenced me so much in having love for the city.

Deisy: Who was that poet?

Esther: I better not say.

Deisy: Did he write a poem called "Cumbia?"

Esther: Of course, that is the one.

Deisy: What kind of legacy would you like to pass on?

Esther: First off, to love the land, without any kind of problems but because it comes from the heart. Once you feel that, you are already serving Barranquilla. And I am very interested in women belonging to the city.

Deisy: What is it that you value here?

Esther: The people. Sincerity, the Barranquillan loves the city and I want for everyone to love it too, to serve the city. I serve the people, I sing their truth and I remind them about the reality of Barranquilla and what it means.

Deisy: How would you describe the women here?

Esther: We are reserved. Women are more or less happy because she takes action and she is allowed to take action. They notice us.

Deisy: What about economic problems?

Esther: No, we have equality here. Men have taken us into consideration. It is not a problem really. The differences between social classes are not a problem because using the word problem is negative. That does not exist here because people just live. I can happily walk up and down the streets here.

Deisy: So folklore teaches our children to be positive people especially regarding loving our heritage? Does loving the land mean you have to be native?

Esther: Not necessarily. I know many people who love Barranquilla not being from here. But folklore is a way to talk to children and become closer to their world, speaking their own language. Because love, this man Jorge Artel, I learned from him. So I teach my art, my own way coming from my own feelings

Deisy: Would you consider yourself a teacher?

Esther: I don't teach, I only feel. I only feel. But I do teach with my songs, in my own way, through my feelings.

Deisy: Was your song "Friend from any part of the world" successful?

Esther: Music has its path and its destiny. People make music and throw it out into the world. Sometimes it is a success and sometimes it isn't. But we leave that testimony for the people because I want the people to love their city.

Deisy: Would you consider yourself a feminist?

Esther: I am not a feminist. Although women have just as many capacities and rights as men. Feminism is a way of thinking that I do not understand. Problems are simply stages that we shouldn't name as problems. They are stages and of that will pass and everything happens for a reason. So we have to learn how to wait.

Deisy: Do you still practice Yoga?

Esther: Yes of course.

Deisy: So what is it that makes you happy? What is it that makes you want to love?

Esther: Oh my, what a good question. They are such small things but either way it is a way of feeling, of living and living through your feelings.

Deisy: Are we at risk of losing the feelings, of living through our feelings?

Esther: There people who are working so that we do not lose our feelings. If we do happen to lose our feelings humanity, men and women have to take action, we have to move forward because that is the only way to attain many things.

Deisy: What actions have you taken?

Esther: No, no, not for me, I live my life dreaming (laughs).

Deisy: What do you dream?

Esther: Artists are always on that plain, we dream. We envision many things. I achieved everything that I dreamed. I wanted to be an artist and I have accomplished that. Right now I don't have ambitions. I don't think "Oh, I wish I would have done so and so" If something happens, it happens, if something doesn't happen, it doesn't happen because it is not meant to be. I have traveled and there is not much that I do not have. Everything has come to me. You see, I practice Yoga and what should be, comes. If it does not come, it does not come.

Deisy: You had mentioned that you were going to write about African contributions?

Esther: I did not do it, but I have not forgotten it. It seems to me that the contribution of our African heritage is waiting to be recognized for many things. It is an extraordinary race. They have made extraordinary contribution. Jorge Artel was a great poet that influenced me. From there, I learned about many

things. I have the book 'Tambores en la Noche' that influenced me because I came close to that reality. I was realizing a great truth; I have never been unappreciative of that race, quite the contrary.

Deisy: Do you feel that there is racism here?

Esther: A bit. But there are many people who are erasing that past and moving forward.

Deisy: Do you believe that dancing can teach us something?

Esther: Yes both music and dance, but music more than dance. I do not dance much because it doesn't fill me with joy like music does.

Deisy: You must be happy to have a statue, no?

Esther: People do those kinds of things. I love it, it is an honor. I don't think I deserve it so much.

Deisy: That's all Esther, thank you for taking the time to talk to me.

Esther: So when are you coming back?

Deisy: I'm not sure, hopefully very soon.

This conversation was simple yet profound. There were moments when I thought she had a false consciousness, but this is her problem free and utopian world. She believes in loving the land, dreaming, hoping, and this attitude free of problems attracted positive circumstances. As researchers, news reporters or mass media in general, we tend to want drama, negativity, fear and tears to evoke feelings of anger in hopes of exposing the realities of social injustice. This conversation was just the opposite. Esther's being as old as she is, defies her age. She has been able to dream and to have a vision for her people who have also encouraged her to dream. Is it the same dream in Artel's "Cumbia" that made me want to research the heart of Atlantic coast folklore? Is this Martina's Tambora music that Fanon struggled to defend as his own? The courage to deconstruct our own oppression has many layers, including the false veil



of perfection that is projected out into the public world. I respect Esther for her utopian view of the world because she like many of the Atlantic coast women I have come to know, own and protect their privacy. As I am living through my writing and research becoming more conscious of the mask of complacency and enjoyment, this reality came crumbling down on Esther's doorstep. All was well with her but not well within myself because I was not following the social rules of etiquette, being reserved and happy. I still struggle to heal the contradictory reality of letting go of an image of what it means to be a good woman and step out into the public and reveal a private truth that shakes the foundation of my upbringing by behaving obtrusively, assertively and in this particular circumstance, invasively. Learning to be a critical feminist sheds the emotional growing pains of what it takes to grow thicker skin as a researcher. Who is this researcher that is now practicing disobedience and disrespect to an elder so highly regarded? "La novia de Barranquilla", Barranquilla's girlfriend, was uncomfortable talking about her interracial relationship with Jorge Artel. She protects her right to privacy. If she is the cities' girlfriend does that imply that the city is patriarchal by default? Her public persona depends on belonging to or having an identity as part of the city while her private life, like many other women, is a space that is difficult to expose and defend because they are not always in a position to use their voices in traditional roles. Esther evaded answering any questions that were problematic or controversial through her even tone of romanticizing the city. According to Esther women have achieved equality, she has not had to struggle during her time and Colombia is a perfect place, a romanticized memory of her personal history.

## Conclusion

The textual analysis of both the art women create and the layered processes of on going experience literary interpretation, interviews with Martina Camargo and Esther Forero as representative of interlaced transitions that involve song, dance as poetic messages, voices and conflicts for women folklorists. For example, Esther Forero's song and voice represented through her life and her music raises questions about the limits of an emancipatory feminism. I deliberate about my own double standard, complicity and unconscious behavior as I begin to expose the hidden truth on how oppression unfolds within the context of Atlantic coast women. This is a multilayered perspective one that I piece together as more substantive shift through this lived research to provide evidence that what I have learned is moving, refreshing and profound in all of its honest and deep rooted simplicity; one that does provide an outlet for women in our hectic world. I have synthesized and deconstructed each text slowly unmasking the contradictory nature of amassed happiness that describes the Atlantic coast culture. In essence, Martina, a public artist, addresses the challenges in a male dominated society but her music represents freedom and wisdom found in nature. Esther leaves a message of hope and love while she refuses to carry on a conversation about social injustice. Women's creative autonomous expressions retain wisdom and knowledge about the way of life for women as those who protect the imaginary of the tropical coast.

In conclusion of chapter 6, the production of carnival culture has been a historical context that gives new meaning to the retention of these performances because they once represented a space of freedom for slaves and now for the lower

classes, it was also a space where the rich flaunted their goods and it is still a place where entertainment and spectacle flaunts its people to the world. The demand for fun and happiness has produced a lack of sincere criticism of the limits of showcasing joy. As in the poem "Carnival," anguish and lament is rarely given a space with a carnival society. The separation between public life and private life is so distinctly judged a machista society that women have often been left out of the equation. In the poem Cumbia and Cumbia Banquena, Cumbia e Zulú y Mulato, women are represented as a mysterious entity, a point of conquest or the dance is symbolically tied to the land. Understanding the absence of women's voices in public spaces, the objectification of the body, calls for critical synthesis of music and song that has mostly been overlooked from a folkfeminist perspective.

These perspectives include both the historical and modern aspects of folkdances that reflect varying forms of African and Native identities that unite and become part of a postcolonial collective. Some of these transformational historic moments are witnesses in the retentions of certain folkdances during carnival season like La Farota, El Garabato, El Mapalé, El Palpteo, and Cumbia. These represent the triumph over colonial oppression like La Farota and EL Paloteo. African freedoms from slavery and corporeal oppression are represented in Mapalé or El Baile Negro. El Garabato is the philosophy of life and the festive union between life and death, man and woman. Cumbia, now observed as Colombia's national folkdance, was socially acceptable among the higher social classes and was also practiced outside of Carnival festivities. Year round performances during colonial holidays provided time and space for disenfranchised groups to unite and develop their own expressive identities. Those who

were excluded, mostly unwed, adolescent or expectant mothers of low social classes united in private spaces where women could sing, dance and express their own lived experience. Bullerengue, began as a tradition where women first danced together as a collective, it continues to be represented as a women's dance. A single female dances in the center or it is a chanted dance where other singers, through call and response, rejoice and mourn over the realities of humanity.

The textual analysis of chanted dance demonstrates that folk artists are struggling to voice their counter hegemonic positions that oppose the velvet curtain of global current, one that rapidly consumes and projects the selling and buying of folkdance and folksong. However, the presence of dissent found both in historical text, lived experience and prospects for the future is founded in an expression and appreciation of humanity and land. The politics of remembering and nostalgia embody histories that are also projected resistances that at times replace the realities of the mechanical world in order to embrace the generational lessons. The illusive appearance of old knowledge in folklore contains messages that are also limitless and timeless.

Where folkdance and folk music lessons have typically been produced by groups and anonymous individuals, some of these qualities hold true but women are now naming tradition as part of a conscious creative process of identity. Martina who maintains a vigilant authorship about the purpose of these traditions is aware of the consequences of losing a part of her culture. Her lifelong mission, like Esther, is to be heard and understood as part of Atlantic coast folk tradition. The other textual lyrics from cantaoras like Etelvina Maldonado, Totó La Momposina, and Petrona Martinez also belong to a singing tradition of storytelling connecting history with community,

individuality with the presence of music and dance where voiced actions raise some questions about gender struggles and provide a matriarchal space as the cornerstone to maintaining solidarity.

Themes fluctuate between philosophies on life that provide hope for those who find themselves struggling and breaking barriers between public and private concerns despite the pressure from social oppressions. Solidarity is evoked through themes and songs that express an inner joy of praising land, ocean and ancestry. These voices celebrate but also lament over the difficulties of motherhood, work, exploitation. and also express an extreme love of humanity and country.

Autoethnographic references regarding my nostalgic and disillusioned experiences coupled with folkdance histories, folk songs, poems on carnival, and interviews with Martina Camargo, cantaora, and Esther Forero Barranquillan folk singer reveals that there needs to be more critical action, debate and discussion regarding the lives of public women in this area. Raising more questions and dialogues about emancipating women through folklore is adamantly needed to peel away isolation, reservedness, subservience, complacency and the evasion of any type of social problems. Being cautious of maintaining tradition, not only as a romanticized perspective of land and country, demands that my/their social conditioning must be critically exposed in an attempt to understand women's contributions to folkdance and folk genre.

Moving forward with a folkfeminist intention now must give way to determining the reality of action-based research. The determination and will for me as researcher to successfully break the mold of harmful ways of living in machista

upbringing has lead to either a repulsion as noted in several fieldnotes as in La Guacherna or living a private and simple life. I finally decide to wander the streets of Cartagena hoping to witness a folkfeminist existence other than with the statue of India Catalina.

I am most definitely not the fierce feminist warrior type that comes across as a radical feminist. I am aware that I have been raised to maintain some sort of balance, peace and compassionate understanding with family relations that nostalgically identify with the Atlantic Coast culture and have also become a more ripened and protected machismo within the home. So I too turn towards nostalgia to cope with detangling my ability to speak for and against traditions that are part of my own social conditioning, as in the Parade of Simon Bolivar where I point out the hard work for seamstresses and tailors. Oppression in the form of complacency and happiness, as noted through the Carnival attitude is a deceiving mask and one that I attempt to unfold by meeting women who are dancers and leaders in the public eye and who are pivotal to unfold a process of transformation. My objective is to continue sharing, learning and growing from the successes and constraints of what it takes to fully embody the many faces of folkfeminism in relation to restaging the concept of critical folkdance pedagogy.

Song and dance as a universal link flourishes as a dance skill through those who remember and maintain tradition. The relationship between folksong and folkdance is inseparable. The song, dance, and visual aesthetic as a performance of history and identity makes tradition and one's own contribution to tradition, a shared space of community and of individual autonomy. In effect, these artforms are an integral part of a social and cultural fabric of a society where women are gaining credibility and

visibility. Understanding women's intentions and motivations for sustaining their practice has potential to restage harmful pulls and pushes of economic struggles that arise given the demands of the hyper commercialization of Carnival. In addition, a critical pedagogy of folkdance represents a balance between sound and action, music and body, self and other(s) as a foundational dialectic of creative movement that binds people and groups. Even though the informal pedagogy of dance is underestimated, the potential benefits for rebuilding communities by restaging Carnival as emancipatory functions within and against broad social factors. The lifeline of Carnival and folksong is complemented by folkdance and best expressed through the lives of women who represent and respond to specific types of folkdance as an artform and a way of life.

Furthermore, an alternative platform restages performances in the context of classroom instruction. Dance as part of a curriculum within public institutions and as a private way of life is primarily linked to individuals who make it possible and who know about the history of dance, practice dance and teach dance from both a private and public educational lens. Seldom do we know about individuals, especially about women and dance in the 'third world', who make performances possible and bring another level of understanding of dance as an area that fosters self emancipation and liberation. How women practitioners use their lives, transmit their passions and overcome oppression is a complex experience. Their messages in the following chapter come from word, action and human agency.

## CHAPTER 7

### WOMEN'S VOICES AND FOLKDANCING

My conversations with dance educators Luz Marina Cañate, Monica Lindo, and Carmen Melendez provide personal references and experiences regarding folkdance as a way of life. I interject with fieldnotes and memories that demonstrate various forms of folkdance as political action, individually, professionally, and socially. These women are folkdance directors and public school teachers that have various concerns regarding women's positions, people's culture through the preservation of folklore and striving to work against the massification of Carnival as an enterprise. More specifically they discuss their obstacles in moving into public spaces, the pressure of maintaining an embodied aesthetic that meets societies' expectations, their economic constraints, social and familial tensions, international experiences and more importantly why they continue to find joy and hope in their work at all cost. I participate in Monica Lindo's dance classes, watch and record Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla dance performances many times as well as travel with her group to various events. I had most contact with Luz Marina, folkdance teacher in a middle/low income high school, Instituto Técnico Nacional de Comercio, abbreviated as INSTENALCO (Figure 13).

Carmen and I have spoken on several occasions, and she has been proactive in leading the legal reforms to protect people's folklore from being exploited. She shares some of her passion for promoting Bullerengue and her African ancestry through several songs she recites as cantaora. The three voices are critical in understanding the struggles between indigenous knowledge and the inevitable pull for entertaining audiences without losing the essence of folkdance histories.





*Figure 13. Luz's dance class.*

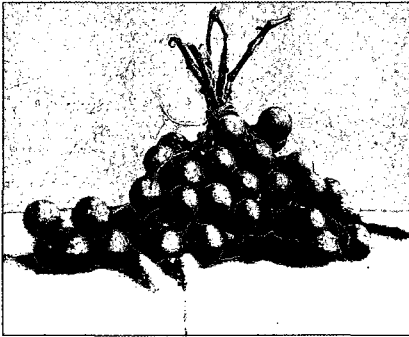
### Meeting Luz Marina

#### *Fieldnotes at Public School*

The taxi honked three times, and I rushed downstairs with my book bag in hand ready to take notes. The familiarity of taxi cabs quickly came back to me--“Don't slam door, prepare to not know where you're going, convert to coastal accent.” When we pulled up I noticed a fruit stand in front of the school. My eyes already started to pick through the best bunch of mamoncillos (Figure 14). They look like tiny limes all clumped together like grapes found only on the Atlantic Coast from what I have researched. They stain and ruin your clothing a dark brown color if you let the slimy orange balls drop. After I bought a bunch I tried not to let the fruit distract me as I went up to the gate.

A mut peeked out of his left eye from his midmorning nap, a guard dog, guiltlessly sleeping on the job. I later found out he was the school mascot, INSTENALCO. The students were suddenly let out of class, energetic, smiling, giggling and pushing each other up and down the stairs, not the same as silent single file lines. The girls were walking around in groups simultaneously chatting, while boys had

their own groups, they quickly noticed me. “Hola Señor” yelled a boy. They are being prepared for a vocational career in this middle to low income public school. Ages range from 6th-11th grade.



*Figure 14.* Mamoncillo fruit.

I was already soaked in sweat stains before they escorted me to the teachers lounge that was a notch below frigid. “Students aren’t allowed in here and if they come tell them to leave” said one of the teachers. Having access to cool air is a benefit for teachers. I sat down and kept eating the mamoncillos, I was introduced to a few teachers, but I had an slightly obsessive affair with my fruit that I had not eaten in many years. A few teachers ignored me and others looked curious about my obsession with this fruit. I finally put them away when the roof of my mouth started to peel. I whipped out my new Sony laptop and began reflecting and observing. That is when I met Luz, we had a chance to interview despite her busy schedule. She took us to the back of the school, into a rusting grey office used to store props and dresses. The decaying atmosphere seemed faded out as her confident gestures and simple elegance immediately drew me in.

Once the students were settled in classrooms, I walked around and met the school band that consisted of three drummers and Raymundo, an apprentice. They were on their way to practice for Luz Marina's dance class. We walked "por la sombrita" or "the little shade" a common courteous expression to take care by dodging the rays of the Atlantic equator sun. Raymundo asked me how to say his name in English. "Como se dice mi nombre en inglés?" is the most popular question among adolescent students. Maybe they were curious to know what an American identity might sound like. "There is no translation, it's all the same." I tried to explain. By now they were all gathered around me like news reporters. I hesitated and uncomfortably flipped that bilingual switch back to a fake American accent "Ray-mun-dough." They were either satisfied, disappointed, or indifferent to the response. I wish I had been more creative. Perhaps the harshness of those vowels hardened the Hispanic beauty of their names. They really did not ask me many more questions nor were they too curious after my first day anymore. Either way, we all looked the same and I easily blended in without drawing much attention.

Luz: Hello. I am Luz Marina. I am from Barranquilla and my ancestors are from Palenque<sup>19</sup>. It is a *corregimiento* in the Department of Bolivar. It is the first free town in America. My grandparents are from here. My mother and father are from here but my grandparents are from there.

Deisy: Do you visit often?

Luz: Well my grandparents now live here they emigrated from the pueblo and are here in Barranquilla. I always visit my grandfather he lives in barrio La Manga, on my mother's side. On my father's side they already died here in

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<sup>19</sup> Under Phillip IV 1621 slave rebellions were common and frequent where masses of slaves would runaway. Palenque de San Basilio was established and the area conserved African culture. During this time period Palenque was only a few kilometers from Cartagena. It currently has its own legislation.

Barranquilla. I also knew my grandparents who were also of Palenque ancestry. They lived there and died here en Barranquilla. They both lived to be 107.

Deisy: Did they also dance?

Luz: Yes, they sang and danced. We are all inclined to the artistic tradition. All of us. My mother is not a dancer but she has always like it. She always supported my brother and me to the arts; she took us to dance schools. She began awakening the love of arts until we reached perfection. For example, if you see it as a hobby one tends to think that you are going to visit a boyfriend and have a good time. But later you begin to envision it from a professional point of view. At the house we all sing and play, my husband too. My father is not dancer or a musician, the artistic vein comes from my aunt. She was a dancer and now she is a director of a dance group. Her husband is a musician, very well know and he works for the District. Because of that, there are always drums, flutes and those were our toys. My little cousins play. I have a two year old cousin and he plays the drums. He plays very well and knows his rhythms, The Baile Negro, which is Mapalé. He makes a gesture with his mouth, grabs his drum and plays it. Very impressive.

Deisy: What about your education?

Luz: Well, I studied in the Sagrado Corazón, a private school with nuns (Figure 15). I later studied at Universidad del Atlántico, a public university. As far as dance, I have been in private dance schools. I have been in Gloria Palma Africana, a dance school through Carmen Melendez, I have been in Gloria Peña's Ballet, and I was later with my aunt, we have the same name, Luz. Then I later went to Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla. I met Monica there and I went to a professional training center and I earned my title and now I am a professor of dance.



*Figure 15.* Two nuns and dancers.

Deisy: Who taught you how to dance?

Luz: They tell me that you learn your entire life but there are things that you are born with, innate. In my house, if you don't dance, better not mention it. In my family we all dance. I've danced since I was five. I went to a school Palma Africana at age six or seven I was there until I was 15. From there I went to Gloria Peña and I was there two years working on ballet. Then I was in group with my aunt for six years. I moved to Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla and that is where I have remained.

Deisy: What have been the most successful moments in your career?

Luz: The moment I arrived at Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla. You begin to unite everything you have learned since I had previously had that opportunity. There are those who go through one track, I was in different schools and when I went to this school; that moment of combining everything had arrived. I try to combine what they teach me along with what I have learned and now I envision dance not as a hobby but as a profession, an aesthetic, if you dedicate your time. When I left the university, when I did not have a job, my profession was dance. I took it to every corner in Colombia. It was not just folklore but making someone smile, it meant expressing my joy, I became dedicated and that was every weekend. There I was, preparing my luggage, so I feel that was the most climactic moment from an artistic dance perspective. Now I am in the process of teaching others so that they have a life perspective. Now that I am teaching, I am also experiencing the most beautiful stage of dance.

(Volleyball teacher interrupts)

Luz: Why are you calling me a liar? Through dance we can have other schools come and participate.

Volleyball teacher: This year we will not have anything, nothing.

Luz: (speaking to the volleyball coach) Maybe we should have a strike saying that folklore is doing well while others are doing poorly. So how can we be supportive of those sports? If they tell you you'll travel, and then you can train but if you do not have any motivation then why train? (Speaking to me) Schools that are well organized can do it on national level. The kids are unmotivated; I started with a small group of girls. If you are persistent, next year you'll have something. You have to prepare yourself. We have to talk to the coordinator so that he can be conscious of the way they organize students' schedules, they'll fit dance in anywhere. In other schools, their organization is perfect, even at the Normal School. You also have to be aware of the school's mission and purpose. Students are trained with an attitude to be technical. They start taking accounting starting in sixth grade. They start with accounting, filing, stenography and computers. The student can work within something technical. Some students have that vision but others do not even know how to write a letter

because they are not interested in that part of school; that is the vision. As I was saying about dance, the students like it, they practice it with passion. Maybe he has not noticed it where sports are concerned. We have a volleyball court, a basketball court and micro-soccer is used the most. They do not use the other ones. We try to establish competitive games but no one signs up. I proposed that a way to interest students would be to do a cultural exchange. You have to find a way to make it pleasant.

Deisy: What has been a difficult experience in reference to dance?

Luz: Well, look, in many ways, like any other career, you have to have a professional vision. Discipline is something you have to keep working on and adapting to. What you eat, your wardrobe, to not make any mistakes because for a dancer, it is obvious when she is on stage. A dancer has to be careful with her hair, her presence, even how you take care of your toenails because that might be distracting. You have to take care of your health. It can get ugly when you have to dance with pain. As a dancer you have to transmit something to the public, it is an internal struggle. It means you have to discipline your body and mind. I work on that day in and day out, constantly. It is a process. Let's say you decide you do not want to go because it is raining outside, you'd rather stay with your family. What would happen? The next day your classmates would be more advanced, your instructor would point you out, you fail in a responsibility that you have agreed to, with the group, with yourself and with the Corporation. They are going to notice that this girl did not come because of thunder and lightning. Rain or thunder you have to be there. We have daily rehearsals. After a day of studying, after a full day of school, humans have highs and lows, sad or happy. If you want to go out with a friend, you cannot meet until after nine or ten at night because you are sweaty and have to get dressed. We had to sacrifice for the profession we have chosen. They are things that you say to yourself "great" but you take another look and think "look all that I've had to do to find my discipline." I do not regret any of it. My boyfriend would ask me to choose between him and dance. I said "I am sorry but I'll keep dancing because that is what I like and that is what fulfills me. If you love me you'll have to wait for me, search for me or be part of the group. That is what my husband did; he became part of the dance team. We traveled together and shared everything because here we are *machista*. People here are *machista* and men used to say "those girls in those groups come and go alone and do what they please at night" So he experienced that pressure from his friends and finally realized that this is what I like to do.

Also, the discipline is complicated here because wherever we would go, we'd take the luggage to the hotel, go see the stage, rehearse, prepare our costumes and set up the stage. We would spend an entire day preparing the performance, a whole day ironing, sewing on the details, a piece of sequence, everything. We'd go eat lunch, come back, test the lights and run a soundcheck. At four we'd put

on our make-up to go on stage at 7. The public does not know that we prepare the entire day, and that is only for that one presentation. We rehearse for four months previous preparing a show. We would take one day to go shopping and sight-seeing.

Deisy: Where have you traveled?

Luz: Well, we have been to the United States, Maryland, Washington, New Jersey, and Manhattan.

Deisy: Who helps you financially?

Luz: We went with the Colombian Minister of Culture and we would go with Colombian ambassadors and other countries too. We had a competition and the school where I was sent a list of everything we could dance and it was selected as the best group of the Atlantic Coast. When they needed a Colombian representative for the presidents, they would call us. We had several trips to Asia, Japan, Korea, and China for one month, United States for two weeks. They had a Hispanic parade day on October 12 on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. Twenty-five of us traveled. We have several contracts for a few days. We were in Europe for two months for the 98 World cup. Belgium, Spain, Paris, Lyon, Lisboa. It's like a fair where we would sell the cultural part of our country. We went to Maracaibo and San Cristobal.

Deisy: How do you feel when you come back?

Luz: Very happy because as a culture, we left our country's pride on high. We have so many beautiful things that no one knows about. We come back happy and proud to be Colombians. In spite of all of the things that happen, we were in Germany, at a two week fair, I didn't even really want to get to know the city. My aim is not to travel; my aim is to know the dances and dance, to have fun and to get to know things about my own country, my culture. If you do things well, people always come back and look for more of what they are viewing. That is why we go on tours and we keep traveling.

Deisy: Have you ever had any problems for being Colombian?

Luz: Well yes, the way they treated Colombians at first, we are such happy people, expressive. In Germany, after one of our presentations we were visiting . . . (not understood) We were going out together and in uniform. We were laughing. It was two in the afternoon. The guide was telling us that German's were talking about us "are they drunk?" They are very conservative and we are very expressive. We were playing around while waiting in line, what is wrong with that? We were also carrying our candles in Japan. You never know where you are going to find candles in Japan. We were very prepared. With the drug

problems, they cut our candles in half and confiscated them. All we had to do was make artificial ones.

Deisy: What is your opinion about dance as a feminist practice?

Luz: Well, there is one important aspect that I am really drawn to is dance and gender, how gender plays an important role in the artistic manifestation of dance.. Women are the corner stone of dance but they also generate machismo through dance because of they take on tradition. We maintain that machismo but little by little, it has breaks so that feminine freedom can also play an important part on dance.

Deisy: What are those breaks?

Luz: Before, we did not have women directing artistic processes, men were the artistic directors. Now women are leading these organizations. They are the directors and founders of organizations. There is a vast amount of people who participate in dance activities and women nurture these activities and we also have to motivate men to participate in these dance activities. So in this case women have enabled the continuance of folkdance.

In my work about dance and gender, I wanted to know why children, after having an artistic formation leave dance once they reach a certain of age of adolescence or preadolescence. I came to find that the group influences machismo by implying that boys need to play soccer or be a part of activities that require more strength; that dance should not be a part of that. Women play an important role because they motivate, they motivate their classmates to participate and men simply inhibit themselves due to societal machismo.

Deisy: Why also do men not want to dance?

Luz: Besides the fact that dance is a manifestation where there should always be a relationship between a man and a woman, dance also tells a history. Not only about women but also about men. Little by little men are detaching from these activities and those idiosyncrasies that men are not meant to dance. The way men try to attract women has changed so much, they are not interested in the history of dance. Social dancing is important for them but not artistic dancing. There are some who take personal dance classes so that they don't feel ridiculous at a social gathering and not be able to ask a girl out to dance or not



know what to do on the dance floor. Social dance is important. Social dancing is essential in any business meeting, at university, for family occasions. On the coast it is characteristic for us to dance during any gathering (insert experience with Mayor), then men feel shy and take classes. When talking about folkloric dance they stop because it seems ancient. You have to find teaching strategies by including contemporary dances in order to introduce folkloric dances.

Deisy: What types of changes or growth have you noticed?

Luz: Dance at INSTENALCO began as an option. Students would choose and participate but others were afraid to be a part of dance. In the process I was able to get closer to students through contemporary culture., what youth like, like hip hop, Regaeton, picó. I began to dance to popular music in order to understand where the student is coming from, corporeally, coordination, being able to keep a rhythm. Later I introduce the history of dance, where dances come from and we began to interiorize in order to express and develop folkloric dances. It is about finding strategies on how to communicate with our youth today. This way they begin to like it and know why certain dances maintain certain movements. It all has a process because historically our ancestor danced and dance began to change due to foreign influences. They began to transform the dance and began changing like this or that coming out from within its own right, and converting into one of the artistic dances we have today. We are not going to dance with the same feeling as our grandparents. It is a way to recreate and remember what our ancestors realized.

Deisy: Would you describe dance as a process for women's liberation?

Luz: Dance not only liberates women but men, the human race as well. The moment an individual internalizes, to see all of the possibilities that the body permits in order to express oneself. When we refer to the dominant classes, you can even see that in traditional dances like Cumbia when our Natives and Africans would interpret it, they would imitate the elegance of Spaniards. Whether in the past or present the dominant classes tend to internalize part of the culture, to take classes to understand the art and value it just the same. They do not interpret it because they prefer to dedicate their time to more productive things. Productivity interests them, and they feel art does not produce. Art produces the internalization, the personal aspects, not the economic aspects. Very few businesses support these activities because they do not see the economic benefits. Some have tried to convert this into some form of profit but it is impossible because those of us who are leading, in general, we are not mercantilists or commercial marketers. We might sell a dance because we have to make ends meet within the situation we are living and we have to demonstrate our artistic work. But profiting from a dance is something that does not coincide with dance. If a person supports the arts then it is because the person enjoys it. A businessman supports the arts, music; it is because he has lived from these

experiences. It is difficult to commercialize because it is something spiritual, fulfilling. Dance just isn't dancing for dancing sake because we are generating a series of values like responsibility, compromise, punctuality becoming better at what we do. To overcome obstacles for myself not for anyone else. In order to master certain movements through practice, that is what makes it permanent.

We have to have parameters and certain values or else things fall apart. We have to take that into consideration because capitalism will not. For example, the carnival of Barranquilla exists primarily because artists love carnival, their dances, their music. Or else carnival would not exist because very few support us economically. Before, we used to go door to door to different businesses offering our dances, our spectacle. The income would go to the businesses and they would never distribute it to the people who actually make carnival possible. So what happens? Carnival has not died because people love carnival and they love their art. If we left it up to the corporations, it would have died by now because in reality, they are only thinking about production and economic gain. They are not interested in having a rich performance where we incorporate the folklore of our small towns, nothing. Folklore is symbolic of people's power. They take charge of their traditions and the day that these groups get together and say they are not going to go to Carnival S.A., corporations will have to make a move because they are not the ones who make carnival, we wouldn't have carnival. People who make carnival possible united, formed a group of researchers, we took all of our data to UNESCO and indeed this is an oral, material and intangible art form of our humanity and we have to keep it this way.

As a teacher I have been receiving support so that children do not forget these traditions. Before there was never an obligatory dance activity but it has won some space within the last ten years. Schools are now becoming more and more interested in having directors or professors develop specializations so that children know about their culture. History is a part of mankind and children should feel proud of their culture and participate not only as carnival personalities, voluntary or involuntary because there are always different levels of participation. They need to know what dance means, why it surges as it takes initiative, it is important for them to know their history.

Deisy: Do you consider yourself a leader in this process?

Luz: As a woman I am a leader in this process. We are warriors because we go up against the society. It is not only about teaching or educating but we also have to open up spaces within our colleagues, directors and build a consciousness that this is valid work for the future and for the integral formation of youth who are then going to be part of a society and that dance will help them. It helps to internalize, it helps integrate themselves, show themselves. In my case, I have experiences with very timid and introverted children who were

able then to express themselves more and have self confidence. Dance enables that the child going to have knowledge of how to move the body in his/her personal life, they will be able to express themselves and incorporate their ideas through movement. They are permitted to incorporate their ideas mentally and physically.

In dance, we lack without a man as a complimentary, without a woman we have something missing. A woman enriches the artistic value but to show themselves causes shock among youth, they are fearful and that fear can subside as soon as they are able to take ownership and have a sense of security. As soon as they are self assured they will be able to show the world what they know.

(Incorporate observation of day of the professor)

Luz: I had an experience where I had to research Negro dances in the Americas for a school. I tried locating these folkdances in the United States. Well, what happened to Negro folkdance in the United States? There aren't any traces. I did find quite a bit on the modern or contemporary, hip-hop, rap but I cannot find folklore; I simply could not find it. The information did not give me any kind of horizon of what happened in the United States. I could find traces in Panama, Cuba, Colombia, Peru, Chile but what happened with Negro folkdancing in the United States? I could not find a starting point where I could begin constructing that information because it is very limited. We don't know about it, it has stayed there. The people who lived on the land and territory do not have the same projection of what was made or formed through dance. Is it that they do not have a clear identification? When people do not know their ancestors, they take from here and from there and there is not a clear identification with the land where they live. When people identify with their ancestors, we identify ourselves. There is an element of say this is Colombian or this is Peruvian that is important. We all need to leave footprints and write about experiences apart from the technical and mechanical side. We are living in a moment where we need to write about these experiences. This text or that video needs to be supported with what I have lived. In the U.S there is too much routine, too mechanical and I would not like to be a part of that mechanization. Maybe we can all give away some of that spirituality to improve on productivity. That person will work better because they feel better and not tired all of the time with so much pressure. No, no, no, no, that productivity, no. It is not necessary. We need not move in that same direction. We need to find a way to distribute it among human beings.

*The Dance Exchange Must Go On! Strike: Fieldnotes October 7, 2003*

In the teacher's lounge, I am trying to write frantically. The voices and shouts come from every direction.

“The ADEA says to strike. There’s money in the bank and we have a right to be paid. We need to go on strike because only three teachers have received their pay.”

“Does everyone agree?” asks the director.

“No not me, I was already paid!” a teacher backs out of the fueled discussion.

“The students have already been given their report cards for their parents to sign, they will have to bring them signed on Thursday.” says one teacher.

Luz Marina stands up to speak. “Please, silence, I am losing my voice. We can’t have the students turn in their report cards on Thursday because we are hosting an international program and students from Cali will be here. We are going to have a mass to welcome them; we need all of the students here for that. We have already set up contracts for Thursday. Would it be possible to move it to Wednesday?” her voice drowns out.

“Maybe the solution is to have Luz Marina stay and collect report cards!” sarcastically yells a male teacher.

“No way, have the men stick around to collect them. They are taking advantage of us!” yells one of the teachers.

*I cannot hear anything but noise, I cannot make any conclusions out of this meeting. I tune out and notice the puddle from the air conditioner on the floor.*

“We’re not working until we are paid!”

Luz Marina speaks, “I’ll call the students and tell them to come on Wednesday.”

A random shout “They government has stolen 100,000 pesos!”

“What about classes?”

Students are starting to look through the dividing window to see what is going on.

“We have to be supportive of Luz Marina’s activities, how would you like to have an empty mass?”

All of these complaints are ineffectively bouncing off of the school director. I find it ironic that Luz manages to successfully organize an interregional exchange with other schools, such as Cali, through folkdance, while the centralized public school system, in Bogotá, is not able to pay teacher salaries.

This was not the first festival INSTENALCO would host at La Amira de la Rosa Theatre where folkdancers from all over the country, pending state funds, represent their traditions; much like football teams traveling from Chicago to New York. For many students dancing festivals are the only way out of the region and for Luz, on many occasions it was a way to share folkdance with the world. This specific quarrel between Luz and the school director demonstrates her courage to have a persistent voice during moments of potential sabotage due to a school strike and poor organization in distributing report cards. She admits that the process takes time, especially working for a school that trains students to become technical workers. Some students may not be interested at first but despite these challenges she introduces folkdance through contemporary knowledge to teach historic knowledge.

Folkdance, she admits, reinforces gender stereotypes especially for adolescents but the practice is also a liberating experience. At present she finds that boys do not want to participate as they had before. Once boys become young adults, they are socialized into perceiving dance as a non athletic practice. Society and parents teach

machismo to children by not encouraging them to dance, only because they believe it be a effeminate space. On the contrary, Luz clarifies that folkdance does symbolize relationships between men and women. Luz halts this way of visualizing dance by educating the students with historic facts of where they came from and what they mean for the people of Barranquilla. Her pedagogy was a true success during Teacher Day, where students plan an entire day of shows, food, entertainment and gifts for their teachers. They hosted various dance troops. Students serenaded teachers with their own poetic songs, budgeted for purses, watches and coffee mugs. The students brought us a nice lunch, a bit of champagne and vanilla cake. Teachers most certainly are deserving individuals. Their patriotism to Barranquilla became evident as the student body, oblivious and indifferent to the Colombian national anthem instantly stood at attention, hand on heart. The echoes of children singing to the Barranquillan flag were a testament to the love they have for their region.

#### Luz Marina's Folkdance Pedagogy

Sharing folkdance is based on peaceful action. Colombian folkdance, as once was done with folkdance as a symbol of diplomacy in many ancient eastern traditions, is also a peaceful aesthetic between one nation and another due to the fact that dancers quite often travel with Ministers of Culture or Colombian ambassadors. In this instance Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla was the group chosen to represent Colombia because they have a broad national repertoire of folkdance. "We sell a cultural part of our country" she states. Happiness, pride and so many other beautiful aspects go unnoticed. Although many dancers may not have any knowledge about the business or

economic transactions, the reality is that dance becomes a form of sustenance and economic survival. Between dance and production, dance is a personal or deeper expression of her life, one based on valuing dance prior to its consumption by local entrepreneurs. People, according to Luz, have the power to keep dance and carnival alive, not the businesses because the world wants to see a form of liberation in action, a history founded in movement. If women plant a seed, then dance lives on forever but for this to happen women must leave their marks and write about their lived experiences.

Luz's passion for dance and music has been a family tradition rooted in Palenque culture. Dance has not always been amusement or entertainment since sacrificing time for dance meant not having time to lead a typical social life with friends. Despite the common machista perception that traveling and having freedom to move around the world correlates with promiscuity, her persistence exemplifies a professional aesthetic. Moreover, as leaders in Barranquilla the nation are on a campaign to make sure folk artists are documenting their artistry, the country has supported Luz Marina in conducting research about gender differences in certain dances and how mother's especially perpetuate the cycle of machismo. The solution slow, she states, through education we begin with contemporary music and move back into reflecting about our own history. Once students have understood the historic significance they take pride and never forget these lessons. This is most gratifying in her professional career, one that she plans to continue.

"So what happened to African dances in the United States?" she commented almost as an aside. We both pause in silence. The response is too long and somewhat

painful to explain. Prior to this study, my findings revealed that folklore had been theoretically defined by men, not its feminist practitioners. This was the moment where I should have said, "You are that 'so what'." The historic knowledge she carries is vast and taken for granted in this area because some history is embedded in our memories as joy and not always as the interpretation of silence or the void of some kind of knowledge that all of a sudden went missing. Yes, laws were invented in the U.S. to eliminate dancing altogether, groups and families were separated and our festivals and celebrations never tolerate dance, especially with British and Puritan backgrounds. This was the simple explanation. She critiques our machine-like attitudes and our overwhelming focus on productivity. How does Luz Marina propose to resolve it?

Dance as a life long practice, according to Luz, is something you are born with, an innate intuitive practice. With it she has developed a professional aesthetic founded on personal growth in areas such as creativity, inventiveness, beauty and movement. Her inner awareness transmits artistic traditions throughout the world as a teacher and traveling artist. Now, the physical benefits of dance draw in broader participatory audiences, especially among the elderly and others whose purpose is to shed a few pounds. Nonetheless, an embodied knowing is always at work and already engaged in the practice of folkdance movement, especially as a process of information between intergenerational and corporeal awareness, much like she has learned from her family and her dance teachers. Dance, whether as a form of physical exercise or embodied memory, engages a deeper consciousness into liberating certain fears. For example, she stresses her struggle with finding men that will commit to dance because of the social pressures of appearing masculine and choosing other physical activities. Even among



the uncertain economic relationship between businesses and artists, hers is a continued optimism for the people who hold the power of this knowledge because without the hacedores, the doers or practitioners, folkdance would not exist. The persistence of her life's work from student of Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla and Palma Africana and now teacher, dance is a personal practice for her own growth and teaching others how to incorporate these historical embodied practices through her professional work at INSTENALCO equally develops their self confidence and ultimately the joy of the spirit as a process of folkdancing.

#### Dancing With Monica Lindo

*The language of dance and music makes us communicate universally. Even though none of the instructors or artistic interpreters know Japanese, we are able to reach levels of comprehension that cross barriers of verbal communication, enabling us to reach personal emotions for those people who are absorbed by technology, prisoners of social rigors with fears of the spontaneous and the improvisational. Today they have found a new way of expressing themselves and a new way of getting to know a country. Despite all of the censorship, we can feel, live and enjoy the culture. (Lindo, 2003, p. 9)*

I met Monica at the Arte y Parque performance. Although she was sitting on the steps by the Amira de la Rosa theatre, she was intimidating but I introduced myself anyway. My first impression of Monica: confident, stern, protective and loving. "You can record but just don't record the entire dance, just sections of it." As director of Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla and my dance teacher for a few months (Figure 16), she seemed reserved, cautious about my intentions.



*Figure 16.* At dance studio.

After dance practice one night, we went to a parade over in Barrio Abajo, the low side of town. We walked for 45 minutes to see a street performance and parade that was put together as a political campaign for the running mayor. We were all sitting on the curbs, standing and hovering to see the spectacle. Once the mayor came out, he danced the Cumbia and Mapalé. Monica whispers to me “If you can dance like the people then you can win the people over with their vote, he’s trying but he doesn’t look comfortable.” This show was an attempt to win over the votes of this sector of town. After the long show, I bought the five of us a few beers. I realized then that they had no money. I was happy to give and almost ashamed of my wealth. Their dire economic situation became clear to me that night.

“¡Y ese milagro!” “What a miracle” she said when I had not come around for a few weeks not knowing why I felt guilty and embarrassed at abandoning her life’s passion. I was ready to be looked at, top to bottom because she would immediately notice my weight gain, even if I had already lost 5 pounds. Although by the end of my stay, I sweat off the pounds, a dance teacher’s dream. I may have made her proud; it was hard to tell since very few compliments were thrown out to humor me. Our emotions were channeled into moving our bodies. I trained with her dance company but

never publicly performed. She was intense and determined. I could not make the commitment she expected from her dancers but we both made an agreement, I would one day dance a Cumbia with her team. We still have some unfinished business.

*Monica and Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla*

Deisy: Where are you from?

Monica: I was raised with my grandparents. My mother and father are Barranquilleros. My crib, though, since I was three months old was in a sector very close to the market, an industrial zone.. My grandfather, grandmother, aunts uncles all lived together. All of my family is from Barranquilla and since I was 24 or 25 years of age, I stopped living there. I married and became independent.. My father is a DJ and he plays for the Atlantic radio station. My mother has been polifacetic. She has been a hairstylist in beauty salons and has traveled a lot she has not stood still. She gave me to my grandmother and went to Curacao en Venezuela. It is an island that is in the Holland Antilles. She traveled looking for new work opportunities. I didn't have a relationship with her until I was 10 years old. We had a fair-weather relationship. Now that I am 29 she came back and now we have a relationship. I have always had a relationship with my grandparents. My father began another family. I have four brother and they are also independent. They have a business in sound systems. They work on sound systems for events, recreation, animation and recording. It is a family business because my brothers, on my father's side, also do the same line of work. I have a sister on both sides and I am the oldest on both sides. My mother lives in Curacao and my father lives here. Lately we have had a good relationship. At first, since I was raised apart from them, I did not realize they had this business. Now, my brother works at all of my performances and my father has collaborated in many of our events. It has been a mutual collaboration because he recommends our dance group to his other businesses.

Deisy: Who taught you how to dance?

Monica: I came into contact with Carlos Franco. If he were alive you would have liked to interview him. He was a very special person and touched the lives of many people. During my last year of high school, I had a dance teacher but one day one of his dance students came to class and I didn't know him yet. One day she asked "if anyone is interested in being part of a professional dance group then you can sign up for an audition. I am part of a dance school called Danza Folklorica de Barranquilla, directed by Carlos Franco, if you are interested sign up." I innocently signed up. I had no idea about the high level that I was attempting to aspire to. That was in September 1986. When I arrived there were so many other dancers who had professional ballet training. They

were only picking thirty students. I singed and I was even though I was short very fat, my hair was really short. I did not have any characteristics of being a ballerina. Either way, I went through with the audition. In one audition we had to dance Cumbia and Mapalé. He asked if we wanted an additional audition.

I said “Me!, I want to dance the Joropo,”

He says “You know how to dance Joropo?”

“Yes”, I said confidently, “I know how to dance Joropo” I put on my shoes. I learned this dance informally because I wasn’t doing it very well. Either way, I had no clue that I was doing it wrong.. “Me! I’ll do it!” so I started to dance.

He says “That’s not how you dance it” and he started to dance with me. He did the steps, 1, 2, 3 and their, that’s it.”

I thought I hadn’t made it because of that. I hadn’t danced it well enough. One day at school the letters came and they called me into the office and told me I had been chosen. I couldn’t believe it because there were professional dancers that had not been chosen. I was not a professional dancer. The first rehearsals were on Sunday, then the weekends, then the 10th anniversary was coming along and we began to practice every day. That was something I was not accustomed to doing. I would normally be at home by 7 and then it turned to 11. Access to transportation was so difficult. I began to have family problems because of that, they were not used to me being a part of that school. They had no idea what I was doing exactly. When rehearsals began, a production company called came from Bogota to do a documentary about the history of Carlos Franco’s. Gloria Triana came to one of our rehearsals to interview an old student and a new student. Out of all of the new dancers they chose me.

Deisy: Was it your personality?

Monica: I asked myself that same question. I also asked my teacher, Carlos. He says “When you came to audition, I didn’t really see many options for you because you are physically not the type of dancer I normally choose for this dance group. There is something in your eyes, in your look, that says many things about you. They are very expressive. I don’t know. I had an intuition. Let’s keep her.”

So from his point of view it was one of those unexplainable intuitions. He can look at you and say, I feel something about this person and I am going to give it a shot. That did not upset me. Some might say that he did not choose me because of my dance ability. I danced, I had rhythm, it was all good. I interpret the dances well. Physically, I wasn’t tall or thin or black, really black like he liked to have during those times. There were blacks and whites, all tall and thin

and I did not measure up physically. I would ask him and he said he just could not put his finger on it. It was a look. So when Gloria chose me to do the documentary, I was extremely afraid because my family did not know anything about this, not a clue. I thought my grandmother was going to throw them out, call them names, I had an innermost fear. My grandparents are Evangelical and would say "That's the devil's work, mundane, they'll make you dance in the nude!" They did not know I was in a serious group, rather than in a group that perverted women. My grandmother was not supportive. She said "I am not giving you any more money for the bus or your dance uniform." I did have an uncle that helped me. He would pick me up at rehearsals and I told him, listen some people are coming from Bogota who want to film me, how I live and I am scared mom might say no. he said not to worry, he'd help. "I'll talk to your mother tell her not to meddle and stay hiding in her rooms."

The day came when they were going to come and they came in a van that said RED TV Audiovisual. The people from Bogotá, the cameraman, Carlos and I hadn't even been in the group for one month and Carlos asks me where he needs to go to get to my place, we went through streets and curves and finally arrived close to the market. He said, "you live here? You live so far away!" We still weren't even close to my house. We kept going and going and we arrived to the place where I lived. He said this is in the boon docks, way out of the way. All you could see is the Philips and a brewery. There were many factories and I lived in a corner somewhere between them. He said "No way, this is incredible that you travel from so far." Carlos had on some shorts and a shirt and walks into my house as if it were my house. I was a bit nervous because when my mother would see him she would say he had quite some nerve to walk in like that.. He went into my room and was looking for the kitchen and while looking for the kitchen he walked into my mother's room. My mother was right there and Carlos humbly said "Hello ma'm how are you? Are you Monica's mother? He introduced himself and did it in such a positive way that my mother changed her mind completely. This documentary is called "a school, a life, and a struggle." It is part of a patrimonial film in Bogotá. It's in a place called audiovisuales and there is a part where I am at my house, how I get up in the morning, go to school, put on my uniform, it's basically my routine.

That was an important part of my life because my mother noticed that I was serious about dance and how things were changing. I spent my life there at Carlos' school and I evolved rapidly. I changed physically because I fully gave myself to ballet classes. There was a professor Susana Selten, a Swiss, and I received modern, jazz and everything. I graduated the year after and my appearance changed, I lost wait, my physical attitude improved and little by little I played a bigger role in being involved in the choreography. I began to parallel Carlos by giving classes with children and he began delegating more responsibility. I became his assistant in the last years of his life. I became director of his school because he fell ill and was in bed for two years. I was in

charge of the administrative duties, the artistic portion; it helped me to grow a lot. During the same time I became accredited to teach physical education. We went on various tours and did many things. We were very dedicated to dance and when Carlos dies in 1994, the dance team became independent and we started our own group. We founded the institution Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla. Carlos past away on January 21 and the Corporation was founded May 1<sup>st</sup> that same year. A few people organized this, I was the artistic director and Robinson was in charge of the administrative. That was another process because I had to stop dancing in order to direct. Many people have passed through these hands and in these past ten years we have had the opportunity to travel many places and to work seriously. So this is the big picture of my dance career.

Deisy: When do you feel you've had most success?

Monica: There have been many moments but I don't really make it out to be a big deal, you know? Anyone who would hear may say this might say "oh, but you danced for the emperor's of Japan and for the president of the United States" but that still does not say much. Not because it's part of work and its logical but because it is logical that if you work hard, you will reap the rewards and if I don't work I won't reap anything. At times I think it's such hard work that when the moment of success comes, you think "Well, what am I doing this for?" But there have been memorable moments for me. For example, the experience with Japan has been significant because nobody knows the dancing Monica, they know the Monica that is able to establish dance classes in Japan. We surpassed the expectation that went from "Oh, how pretty you dance" to it is so awesome that someone Colombian can organize a school in Japan. They hadn't been able to do it and I am very proud that I was able to organize a school and a plan of study, where people can dance Latin dances and students that I teach here can go teach over there.

From international business perspective, that has been the best income opportunity for us. But sometimes I'll take the group abroad, we come back and no one has any money left by the end of the trip. It is so much work but it is a job that I enjoy. We are being paid to do something that they we enjoy and that is significant. We still could be more successful. I hope that this dance school can someday become a business that you can live off of. So that the students can keep dancing, have them working here, preparing them even more, so that I can pay them a salary. When the corporation reaches that level, then I'll feel like I have fully accomplished something. How can this be accomplished? We have made many attempts but the problem with the market, our product is difficult to sell. If we had people who would permanently buy our shows that could ensure a fixed monthly income. For example, in August we do not have any paid presentations, in July yes, in august no, one in September, two in November. We have our ups and downs and the Corporation maintains itself with that. If they

bought weekly performances and we could have a fixed monthly income that would guarantee that the students can live off of that because we could pay them. That is very difficult in this country. There are hardly any groups, even Sonia Osorio's group the ballet of Colombia who is supported by the government, and they pay their dancers minimally. There is no Folkloric Ballet. This dance house sustains itself; we are the only group that has a dance house. Most of the dance directors have classes in their homes. We have tried to avoid that. My private life is over there and the institution is the institution. That has been very difficult especially with this rented house. We want to have our own dance house; that is my intention. The economic aspect has been the most difficult, paying the bills, the electric etc.

The other thing that is difficult is when my artistic life affects my personal life. It is very complicated because it is so personal. For example, for a dancer to fall in love with my husband affects my private life. Those are difficult moments right? That has occurred and that has been the most difficult, having to manage the professional with the personal. She has to become independent, she has to dance because she is part of the group but, ahhhjjj but I deteste her because of this and that. That was a difficult path that I crossed; this was about five years ago, ahhhjjj. (Laughs out loud.)

Deisy: What does folkdance mean?

Monica: Dance can be an artistic expression, not a folkloric one, when you can move to music or without music. You can say many things at the same time. That is the artistic element. When we perform folkloric dances we sometimes fall into the repetition of certain emotive situations of a town or a community. We do a dance called *Paloteo* which means struggles against nations. Every time we do the paloteo we are not exuding a particular feeling but rather representing a feeling that other people had in other historical moments. So we have to take into account the things that have been extract and bring back to the present things that have been done throughout history between the colonization with Spain. It obeys an historical moment which is the colony. The dancers have sticks in their hands and they hit each others sticks as if they were fighting with one another as if they were swords. In other dances we illustrate historical moments lived by our culture. They are actual, still present even though they were first started two hundred years ago, we still feel it the same today, like Cumbia or Mapalé, dances where you can hear the drums and you move the same like they moved years ago, it is transmitted to you. What is transmitted is the same. In the particular case of Cumbia, even though I don't have the dress from the 1800's, I can dance it with these jeans on and I can dance and it still feels the same. There are folkdances that still have a function, one that recreates past moments as if they were a testimony to something today but for me dance can have both of those functions. So what we do with this work is to project

both by incorporating illumination, and dress style. We dress it up so that people will think it is attractive. That is the difference.

Deisy: Have you ever been queen?

Monica: No and I don't want to be one either. That is the easiest strategy that a women has to make her be noticed. It is so easy to say "I have breasts, look at my breasts. I have an ass, look at my ass, I am beautiful, look at me, look at me, look at me." That is the easiest strategy.

I really like the actress Barbara Streisand, I don't know where she is from, she has this nose. I say to myself, "that woman sure is ugly" but as an artist she is so beautiful, her music so beautiful that you forget through the interpretation that she is ugly. Her talent speaks more than her physique. We are full of queens in this country but what we urgently need is to be seen in front of the whole world. I am a woman; I am important, look at me, but from another angle. There are women who fight over being queen of this and queen of that, to be in the newspaper, to take pictures, so that people notice them. They come and go and never transcend, that's why I am telling you that I never wanted to be queen. I don't have the physique and I don't agree in the concept of "queendom" as they believe here.

Deisy: What would you recommend to girls who are trying to become queens?

Monica: Just like they are aware of their physical strengths and weaknesses they need to explore their mental strengths, on a personal level and human level. If my weakness is that I have big breasts, I need to liposuction to reduce them, but you could also say, I'm ignorant, I don't understand anything about politics, my recommendation would be that since they know how to explore themselves physically with lotions and potions, you also have to look for lotions and potions and of the heart and the soul.

Deisy: Do you think of dance as a form of liberation for women?

Monica: I could consider dance as a form of liberation for both men and women, for any human being who can interpret it. As long as it serves a form to express yourself, it has all of the components that logically have the ability for you to free yourself. Perhaps it is not a method but a means. It can be happy or sad, obvious or hidden. At times the hidden aspects reveal themselves when you are dancing because they are the most profound feelings that you have.

Now we have to ask ourselves if all dances permit freedom because there are traditional dances that are rigid in their interpretation. They have a basic pattern that we cannot move or change. The Garabato says that it is the struggle



between life and death, you can't escape it, the good and the bad, you cannot move past it.

Deisy: When you cannot move past it, does that make it historical?

Monica: It depends on the space, where you are interpreting it. If you are doing it with the intention that results from a competition, you have to save it in order to show it in public but if you are in a lucid or playful moment, you interpret it as you feel it. You are not worried about how you are dressed, you just do it.

Now there are social parties that have the 'crazy hours'. They hire musical groups from Carnival that come in and take over the party with their drums and they have free dances with Cumbia, Garabato with everyday attire and it does not matter how you move. The people have free reign to lose control and fun. This is typically for higher class folks, it exhilarates them. It has been going for about one year now. My aunt came from Venezuela and she had one of those at midnight. So to answer your question about dance as a type of revolution, it can be so only if it is spontaneous. For example, if you go to a class and they tell you that you need to learn a choreography and your instructor tells you to dance a specific way, that definitely dims the personal and you accept your instructors interpretation.

Deisy: Is there some of form of emotional stability that comes from being a part of a dance group?

Monica: Yes, there is liberatory learning. The two go together because it liberates you from prejudices. To be touch, to let someone touch you. We have many exercises that teach us about corporeal contact. Young women have difficulties between being touched by a man and permitting them to touch you. Or if we need to embrace one another in a dance, we have prejudices of sexuality at the beginning. Being able to look into someone's eyes, not everyone can do that, it is difficult and it is also part of an internal conflict. Especially in this culture, they teach you that if you are too open you are a whore and a slut or if you are timid they push you away. We have many shy girls here and it is difficult for them. I have to constantly remind them "look at your partner's eyes, flirt with him." They learn that little by little, they begin to experiment. For me, that is liberating oneself from the inferiority complex. However, there is the other extreme, when women are way too liberal, those I also have to control, I see both extremes. "Be discrete" I tell them.

The liberation from your feminine physical aesthetic is also important. When a woman is overweight she feels bad, that is limiting. That is significant because if socially, beauty is linked to being beautiful, to have breasts, be thin, be in form, it is a problem. I personally still have that limitation because I am a dance instructor and the image of a dance teacher is defined as being thin and

corporeally defined. More importantly is not how you look but what you know, it takes time for people to understand that. So when girls are embarrassed about how they look saying "I don't wear strapless shirts, my belly hangs out or I don't look good in short skirts", we begin to work our bodies so that we feel complete. When you look good you also feel good and that is projected all around to everyone, which is fundamental for a dancer. Also, the public does not permit to see an overweight dancer.

There are also people who are confident about their bodies and do not pay attention to that. There has to be something more profound that can liberate you from mental and sexual insecurities but where does that come from? My brother studies architecture, my sister studies law, she is a professional lawyer. With corporeal work you can have a professional life, be a professor and earn a living and dedicate yourself to something you truly like. People come in thinking negatively, that this does not work, that dance is not worthwhile. How am I going to live if I am dedicated to dancing? My mother still questions me.

You can watch someone after three years of 'tasting the waters', and they completely change their minds and think "I can do this, live off of this" they change their minds, they change their inferiority complex and turn it into a strength. It is easier to fight off that inferiority complex of the physical and emotional when you are a person who dances. You liberate your depression by dancing rather than sitting at home, in an office, or working at anything else. Those who work for the government and sit at a window, sometimes they treat people poorly. They have conflicts where they lash out inappropriately. Just by facing your struggles by going to a practice, you can let go of your tensions. There is an organic process at work both endocrinally, biochemically and hormonally, your body is making you feel free.

In many other ways, it becomes a liberatory link for women who very seldom have someone in their family that they can talk to. It is not good for young women to not have a mother or father they can confide in. Many girls and women keep their problems to themselves. If you look at the ratio of internal family aggression, you'll be surprised, it has risen. Women who spend their lives taking care of their husbands and children, she does not do anything else. She depends on them. Then a man comes home and unleashes all of his problems onto her. We need to find a way to implement a dynamic way of spreading dance so that women can go to therapy and becomes part of a group, go to the gym. This is getting worse because the population is rising and in the metropolitan area there is an increase in homelessness. You'll notice that in carnival events there are massive amounts of people and people are looking for a place to go.

Feminist emancipation through dance is possible with an education, an educational campaign that gives spaces of transformation. You can show women the different ways of empowerment. Academics has influenced my life; I also

have an academic life. I have been able to relate dancing to my academic life. I coordinate a program and I use my experiences when I have an exhibition, I also tell my dance students to go to these events. Dance has helped my academic life more than the impact that academic life itself.

Physical formation is integral for student development. It is not only my initiative. Colombia has a national institutional policy to educate students corporeally. So who is going to lead that initiative? They say it is important, so that is where I come into the picture. Another woman and I are leading this campus wide initiative at the Universidad del Atlántico for one year now.

As you get to know yourself, you will get to know others and that is where transformation occurs. If you do not know yourself or others, you cannot change yourself or others, or your society. The only logical way is through education, reading, experiencing new things, sharing academic spaces, having healthy dialogues, going to events. Some do not have this possibility, I know, but possibility still exists.

#### Monica's Folkdance Pedagogy

Despite several set backs, Monica describes the joys of folklore through her life experiences. Not being supported by her family, from the beginning of her career and at present, is a major obstacle in a culture where being validated and supported by family members is essential to building confidence and trust in young women. Monica reveals that many of her students do not have adults they can speak with and that in one form or another, they seek validation and attention by either wanting to be looked at by society or being completely sheltered and protected by parents. She, as well as her students, find this confidence and trust through dance where they have a safe space to discuss personal conflicts when family members are not present. The dance team functions as a family unit as they travel, argue, pray and share much of their time with one another. Each shares responsibility, they are organized, respectful, honest and encouraging when it comes to improving the group's image. Money is scarce and not enough is

accumulated for the group as a whole nor for Monica to make a living. Her main source of income is from Universidad de Atlántico. If being a part of a folkdance team barely sustains the group, what are the underlying reasons that make up for this lack of economic gain? Folkdance is a form of liberation comprised of the moving body, the mental body and the emotive body.

The moving body or physical body, when practiced with proper intentions, liberates frustrations that buildup over time, especially for those who do not move their body or who have professions that restrict movement. For girls who first come into her studio, they are either too wild or too timid. They learn how to balance their movements while learning how to build confidence through their physical appearance. Monica, who also had some problems with her body image when she started training, knows that a dancer who is validated by the audience must look a certain way. The body must first move to feel well. This is a simple concept to building psychological well being. People are hungry for amusement because of the oppression and violence that is all around, but liberation is found in body movement and not an inert body. Acknowledgement of the many benefits of dance can have a positive impact for women who are aware of the harmful sexualized images widely viewed in mass media. Now that girls have the option of changing their bodies with surgical operations, this is a false reality of a still body that hopes to imitate the latest celebrity styles. Girls who want to be looked at and validated as beautiful, is not the problem, falling prey to the global images of beauty is a major setback to a means of liberation through physical movement.

Furthermore, the conflict is a societal one and women reflect this instability by the way they control their eyes. If women demonstrate confidence with a poignant stare,

then they are considered promiscuous but if women's eyes are aloof, they are overlooked as too timid and boring. The majority of young women who dance with Monica are too timid and reserved and learning to look into another's eyes is the best way to achieve presence and personal freedom. The physical body is also liberated through the sense of touch. Letting yourself be touched, hugged and lifted is another obstacle women need to overcome. Touching is linked to sexual prejudices for women and if women can learn to be touched in a respectful manner, they will also be setting an example to liberate sexual stereotypes.

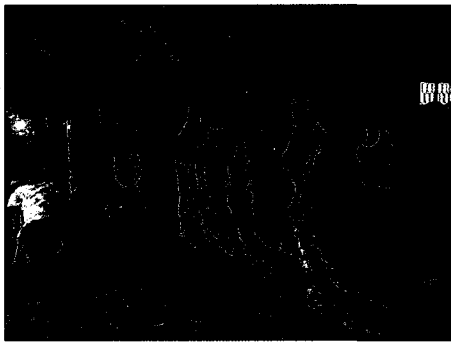
The emotional and psychological body is essential because what you know and feel takes precedence over how you look. Body work in dance develops slowly and is a sign of progress for professional dancing. For Monica this has taken a lifetime of experience in order to create a network for students to also become teachers. The combination of education and dance has been a liberating process for Monica. She admits that although her income comes from being an educator, the lessons learned in her private dance career have helped her success in public education. She is a co-chair in implementing a national policy for dance curriculum that will give other disciplines the opportunity to move outside of their comfort zone. She challenges folks to take risks involving mental strengths to overturn the stereotype of wanting to be looked at for the wrong reasons. While the regional campaigns involving unsafe sex are providing free condoms for women's protection, also implies that women must be proactive to defend themselves in a community where women are constantly devalued by the state. "What kind of message does that send to women?" asks Monica. "That men are not

responsible? Only women are held responsible?” She concludes, woman must do what they have to protect themselves because this society will not.

Folklore can be divided into two differing attitudes. The first is a repetitive history that does not change; a reminder of wars and colonization like Paloteo or the life and death processes like Garabato. Other dances like Cumbia and Mapalé are transcendental because the feelings you have today, without dress or costume, are not a method but a means of liberation. The competitive nature of dances is different than the spontaneous nature of dance. The ludicrous, crazy and spontaneous overlaps sometimes with competitions, either way, it is synonymous with liberation because it permits the dancer to transmit and feel happiness, sadness, whether it is obvious or hidden, profound feelings are the bedrock of dance. Her spontaneous body is more transparent and clearly expressed, not choreographed. You do not go with what your teacher says, you dance as you feel at that moment. *La hora loca*, a new space for spontaneous dancing is taking place during parties which allows people to not only watch musicians but they are caught off guard and able to just let go for an hour. For authentic change to happen, however, risks must be taken to get real with yourself and know yourself. Women must become reflexive agents so that they can educate future generations. Women need this dance therapy more than anyone due to the increase of domestic violence. “My dream is to have a dance studio in the most remote parts of Barranquilla, for battered women, they need this space the most” she remarks.

### Carmen Meléndez: Director of Palma Africana

I visited Carmen twice in her home and studio (Figure 17) and also got lost twice as the taxi weaved in and out of streets. He was certain my address was wrong but as soon as I mentioned her name, they knew Carmen Meléndez (1996) and knew exactly where to find her white cement home on the corner. Her home is also the Palma Africana dance hall. Her work at the Universidad del Atlántico is also spent teaching dance, directing dances and teaching physical education. Her political work as president of Unicarnaval or Los Hacedores (those who make carnaval) is based on maintaining ancestral knowledge where her personal work is politically active. She greets me with a tight hug. Her loud deep voice echoes in the empty dance hall. Every syllable is perfectly articulated and her words flow effortlessly as I sit back and listen and anticipate her spoken thoughts.



*Figure 17.* Dance rehearsal in Carmen's home.

Deisy: What does Cumbia mean to you?

Carmen: A globalized Cumbia is barely Cumbia. The Cumbia that your mother taught you, that is most important part of the dance. Africans transmit this through dancing. We worry about globalization and that people will appropriate it. However, it will change, it has changed and that is only natural but you want to maintain the root intact. Everyone talks about globalization but we let's revisit history, globalization has existed since the creation of the world when the Egyptians wanted to take over Israel and colonize the people who were less

fortunate. But within tradition the truth is that there is much worry because there are two extremes in life, one has to do with total change because we are in modernity and the other is that dances need to be kept exactly how our ancestors kept it and try to keep a certain balance. It is within that balance that permits human beings to not get sick. In the case of Cumbia.

I just finished presenting a project to the Minister of Culture and they approved 1% of the cost of this project. The idea is to take 50 people and replicate what we have learned. We are going to teach it and nourish the retrospective aspect because people come with their own knowledge and try to replace our autonomous roots, for example, the Cumbia, within a competitive global culture. It might sound weird or strange, almost demented but if I do a Cumbia how my mother taught me or my grandmother taught me, it is certain that that Cumbia will not have a market; it will not have a public spectatorship. Boy and girls today are seeing it through mass culture and aren't even going to appreciate it or love it or understand it. And with time, it could disappear. I downloaded an article off of the Internet a little while ago written by a girl on *Tiempo* that said that Cumbia does not have body or heart and that it was going to disappear. I know it will not disappear because we Colombians maintain it as one of the most relevant dances of our folklore.

The transformation of dance can have basic elements that maintain its roots with which one can distinguish the musical aspect of a binary rhythm. Wherever you go and wherever it sounds we know that it is Cumbia because maybe our ancestors played it with a gaitas or flutes which are an element of folklore. People can accept that our folklore has elements are permanent and there are others that can make it viable, they can enrich it, make it competitive, it can entertain and be liked. Right now the Barranquillan carnival sambas are receiving all of the economic support of businesses. With the Colombia vs. Brazil soccer game, they wanted to support the manifestations because they were Brazilian. This has to do more with global culture because we are not making it competitive enough.

You'll see a Palma Africana dress, a European dress, but I would consider that it was a dress demonstrating a Cumbia that could go to a global level. I can't make one of a grass because they'll criticize how poor, how ragged it is. But the dress is a Cumbia dress with elements of global culture. I don't want to place us in extremes but rather in balance and we need to be clear about which elements are identified with tradition. We want to give the people that come to the class an ability to know Cumbia, so that they know what they need to defend when the world starts to listen and dance. It's not about defending just to defend but it is also not about adding things to our traditions. It is knowing where we set our boundaries, limits. We cannot permit this phenomenon of globalization to finish us and destroy our roots and our traditions.



I keep Aquiles Escalante's words very close to me; Cumbia is Colombian, how beautiful. It is a ritual of mourning that is totally indigenous. One of my friends did a thesis in art and she approves that it is aboriginal; I feel that Cumbia has all three cultures, to separate them is to deny history, colonization, and all that we have lived because in the Sierra Nevada you cannot find Cumbia. I have Canguango friends and they do not dance Cumbia, I have not been able to find any one of them that dances Cumbia. I do not find the hip movement, in reference to Pombo's work; it is just as much an African contribution.

Right now I am working with people of Carnival and we have spent so much time with that. Through much experience and many readings, there is a document that I should present tonight. It is about carnival modifications that need to be made, its not just me, there are various people that helped to elaborate this document. This has to do with structuring change, to eliminate the harmful competitions that end friendships between participants. There is a possibility to organize an evaluation team because either way, carnival is selling it all, a supremely popular fact, that that organization has to leave some spiritual and material contributions to the people who participate. It is still a law in transition that is why the people here are so divided; it is a polemic because we have not been able to find an agreement. The ministry and district office sent some contribution and the district divided its contributions within the mayors district but we very well know that we cannot handle politics, artistic cultural politics, we have a lot to talk about, so much to talk about, we'll need to make another date.

In Africa they play gaitas, in the black asentamientos, the best gaiteros of the coast live there. Guacamayas, milo flutes are aborigene but the gaitas have a lot to do with the African culture. Do you see the passion and freedom when the Cumbia is interpreted? You give yourself, elevate and blessed are these Negroid elements. The most beautiful thing is that is where we find cultural patrimony. I am looking for artistic examples we can try out as a form of the three cultures. Black and Natives did not dress like we do now in comparison to how they dressed in the cabildos they had to wear certain dress styles that would negotiate and conform to all three cultures.

The body is the best element to transmit culture, it is an instrument. We go to competition and there are freestyle dances and traditional dances, in a traditional dance you have 50 girls dressed up as Marimondas, with beautiful dresses and that group gets the excellence award and beats Garabato and a Cumbia. Las marimondas is a costume, not a traditional dance. You notice there are five judges, and five insist that it is the best and you are left with "five of cheese and two two of bread" like my grandmother says, fallen short. It makes me sick because I think that is a major injustice.

Nihilism which now is contemporary, you never look at what is underneath or how it was constructed and that is what we need to look at. I cannot just look at that alone; behind tradition are all the deceased ones who added great traditional content that is not being valued. I went to my house with a headache and an urge to vomit. Folkloric themes, drums, cumbias, chandes, I'm talking about the spiritual, the blessed and to finish my CD would be God's will if anyone of those recording studios value autonomous music. Someone lent me money to start recording and now I need much more money to do the mixes. I am going to borrow money to be able to do that.

My teacher Pacho Galán is my music teacher and for many years no one had recorded his songs, Maestro Escorcía won the Villavicencio, he lives there and is 90 years old. He died one month and a half ago. He gave me his drums because everything is in memory of something.

Deisy: Would you mind sharing some of that with me?

Carmen: (song)

*Since my father left, I haven't been able to stop thinking  
that he had bad luck there, my mother fell ill,  
tupatupatupajele, that is the inheritance that was left  
when the drums sound, I don't know what I feel.  
Cry, candé, my sister, those who leave do not come back  
my sister, what you have lost you cannot regain,  
I'll tell the whole world that he who leaves does not come back.  
You and my companions, I give you music.*

Carmen: Another one is called "Inheritance."

*Between you and my drum, this is what is Cumbia,  
Jose Condonga, Pacho Galan, I cry now, a Chalupa,  
a sound of Palenque in criolle language, a gaita,  
Catalina they are songs of times past....inheritance,  
what beautiful inheritance the Blacks left me,  
that is what I take within my body,  
it comes chained without looking at the sunset  
and to the sound of drums and to the sounds of..  
with Indian and white my blood crosses but my blackness I conserve.  
I will leave my children the inheritance that I have,  
that an aro left my grandparents, I always suffer discrimination,  
singing I defend your vodu/god and value (song ends)*

That is it more or less.

Deisy: Thank you, I would love to hear your CD when it comes out.

*Interview with Carmen, May, 2008*

Deisy: Is there a space for folkdance to become a means of pedagogical consciousness and social change? What can we learn from folkdance? Where does feminism stand within this social consciousness?

Carmen: Truly, amidst all of my optimism, there is great uncertainty. Who, in this contemporary society, can struggle against the power of mass media? We are instruments in the hands of those who have economic power. All they do is line up the population and especially in underdeveloped countries like Colombia. Twenty-four hours a day, they stuff the community with misinformation that denigrates thoughts and human behavior. The struggle is unequal, imbalanced. We could actually, during these times, say it is impossible. I, as an optimistic professor, God has me in two different functions. The first is in physical education and recreational sports, secondly, I am instructor for artistic staging. Beginning with this background, I come like a swallow looking for summer, because I believe we can have summer from the standpoint of educability. One person cannot reach big goals. But as I said, within educability we can because my students have the space to reflect about existing problems and from their points of view we can open up a dialogue where they share their life experiences, what they want to have, what they want to construct for this country. I open up the space and tell them they are in charge of their future and they will be part of an institution where the things that we discuss can become part of a country we are visualizing.

Deisy: So how does dance branch out as a type of social justice?

Carmen: I have to tell you something. Here in Barranquilla, we have carnival; a major folkloric expression of Colombia but it is also the most unequal and unjust cultural fact in Colombia. Carnival has been handed over to city corporations. They gave them money on top of that and a public space to administrate carnival. The cities' economic power, the state, represented by the district of Barranquilla has been agreed upon through law 033 and modified by law 056 and carnival was handed over. Why do I speak to you about carnival? Carnival is dance, it is an expression, a communication, a mask, sequence, folklore is humanism. That expressive space, we can say that is no longer libertarian because it is commercialized. Not even the performances can be spontaneous, only directed performance. So when you ask me about the present day situation, I am telling you this because we have managed to have a group, practically all women. They call us the matriarchy. It has emerged from the low social bases and it has gone up to UNESCO. I am president of this organization called United Corporation for Carnival, Unicarnival. We are representatives of those who make carnival, the *hacedores*, the makers of Carnival. We safeguard

carnival as a patrimony of humanity. From there we are leading a process of defense for the rights of those who make carnival, those who participate, dance, wear costumes, make food, make music from the perspective of social bases, not the people they bring and put up on a float. It for those who are on foot, those who nurture the culture, those who represent folklore, those who go up against the globalization of carnival, those who reward us.

We have to work from a space where they can negotiate and not police what is ours. So when you ask about his moment, we are now struggling using that organization, to restore our rights for those who make carnival. When we hand over carnival to the rich ones of the city, they don't keep us in mind and they completely ignore us. Within Unicarnaval, we are debating in the Barranquillan council. We are also debating with the nations' attorney general's office; we are debating with the nation's accounting office. We discuss our investments, our dress attire, the permanency of our dresses, costumes, the choreography, the tendency for the folks who parade, the participation and the economic investments that we make for transportation, to pay the musicians, which is not at all, not at all, not at all, equitable with the charity that corporations give us. So we are struggling with all of the investments we make, so that we take action and by being action-based, we have to have spaces of evaluation, positions where the culture defends itself and where we are safe keepers of folkloric culture and carnival culture. It is utopian but we have already been in the utopia twice within the Barranquillan council. We had a meeting with the vice-minister of culture. We have gone to Bogota, yes sir. They have publicly denounced us saying we are against carnival, but we have by the same means, we have gone as a group and we have told our truth. Now Barranquilla is starting to know that carnival handles more than a billion pesos. The only distribution total for all of the groups were 120 million pesos, that amount of money is like in colonial times. The Ministry of Culture sent 180 million and the corporations gave 120 million, so we distributed 300 million pesos among more than 500 groups. So they received 300,000 pesos or 600,000 pesos. Those of us who received the most, it came to 1.5 million. The director of Carnival only received 10 million pesos, monthly.

We are still battling it out, mostly women are leading this battle because we are less fearful, we prepare ourselves more and knowledge is fundamental in developing our city. An ignorant city is one that does not have the fundamental bases to go up against conflict. I have that knowledge of legal norms of human behavior, the sociological, and the anthropological.

Deisy: Thank you for your honesty. You have been leading this difficult project since we last spoke.

## Carmen's Folkdance Pedagogy

Some of Carmen's experiences come from teaching dance in her private home, teaching physical education at Universidad del Atlántico and her own creative personal outlet of being a student of music. She is a political activist on behalf of carnival practitioners and dancers.

We sit the same table as last time. Nothing has changed except Carmen looks more alive and alert than before. Her hip surgery eliminated the uneven wobbling. Her voice echoes all around the dance hall, another room in her home. Her voice is deep, her words come out slow and perfectly enunciated, passionate sounding much like Maya Angelou. Each word eloquent almost rehearsed despite of my rather open ended questions. I sit, listen and nod my head like I did for Monica and Luz. Can you explain what you mean by "una golondrina no hace verano?" I never heard the "It takes a village" expression in Spanish. But when this is not possible, one person can also make a difference.

Being a physical education and artistic director does not impede her from veering from the teaching norms of body work. She stresses the need in education to earn student trust. If they trust the teacher, then it is easier for students to be reflexive enough to talk about social change. New ways of teaching involves students' realities and the educability of the student's body. Educability of her student body goes from understanding the global impact of how we view our bodies. Students internalize these processes in order to subvert them. Once students are more conscious about how global images impact their self understanding, they can learn to respect others, themselves through tolerance, solidarity that begins with the perceptions of our body and students'

educability. The cross disciplinary approach to dance may resolve inner conflict within the student and society pressures and in turn can serve to appreciate the root of folklore as an autonomous expression of Atlantic Coast culture.

Folkdance is related to family tradition. Like the Cumbia, this knowledge is passed down from mothers and grandmothers. Globalization is changing Cumbia and will continue to do so but carnival is also a platform where resistance is taking place. The carnival as Bakhtin's revolution has changed but folkdance as people's culture and activism has not changed inspite the commercialization. According to Carmen, as long as the root of the dance is kept intact as a musical inheritance from family, ancestors and musicians who are conscious of preserving ethnic nature of the dance, they too preserve the core of Atlantic coast culture. Whether it symbolizes the mournful and nostalgic feelings of music intertwined with loss and ethnic retention, women also struggle with assimilations brought about through modern day spectacles. Carmen's political fervency has much to do with her personal experiences with ancestral consciousness, economic struggles with Carnival injustices and conserving the root of dance is a challenge that she seriously undertakes on behalf of the *hacedores*, the makers and doers of Carnival, the people marching and dancing. Her presidency for Unicarnaval entails talking to heads of state and lawyers as part of a policy to gain more equitable distribution among *hacedores* of carnival. In part this political movement enables groups to perform without the added pressure of competition that many times leads to competing with friends, leading to resentment, political favoritism and loss of solidarity among certain groups. Festivals, according to Carmen are the most unfavorable and unjust of all enterprises. The group insists that Carnival S.A. should

more equitably distribute the earnings, leaving the groups with a sense of appreciation,  
integrity of spiritual representations as well as material gains.

CHAPTER 8  
CONCLUSION

Fieldnotes Journal, December 24, 2008

I had to go home again, to the sun and ocean so they could write my conclusion. As I lay basking in the Cancun Caribbean sun, I came to be more in tune with the spirit of Christmas in solitude, seclusion and to finish this chapter with the help of the ocean that sits to my left periphery. Then my ipod jolts me again--lively jazz base cello plucks, hands clap, Martina's shrill voice sings "*Tus padres te han dicho que no hables conmigo, la mar, (tambora drums join in) los montes no tienen llave ni murallas los caminos . . .* and now today, the gift of speaking with the ocean and crossing those borders to reflect the passion and relentless drive to find closure, I am grateful and nostalgic because I am privileged to write and think from a paradisiacal place. Martina's song reflects a heartfelt relationship of love, land and ocean, but she does not say which land nor which ocean. The pedagogy and uncanny attraction between poet and nature comes from observing, learning and living from its lessons. So as I seek to find concluding remarks, some of these, I attest as a journey, come to me alongside the help of a protagonist to any study and the connected identities located on top of the Caribbean Sea horizon.

In synthesis, the collective voices of folklore sing, dance, and speak:

*"if the pasture burns, let it burn, it will spring again."*--Etelvina Maldonado

*"do not fear insults, put on your dress, put on your courage, even the virgin Mary was a mother."*--Totó La Momposina



*“the countryside has no keys and the paths do not have walls, the ocean”; “the perdiz bird sings because she wants to not because she is lost”; “a woman leaves and then another one enters. You feel like you are in another world, what is your own.”--Martina Camargo*

*“we are warriors because we go up against society.”--Luz Marina Cañate*

*“we have carnival, the most unequal and unjust cultural fact in Colombia.”  
--Carmen Melendez*

*“if you do not know yourself or others, you cannot change yourself, others or your society. The only logical way is through education.”--Monica Lindo*

*“love the land as if it were your own mother, feel it, defend it”; “one day the bells of love will ring and God will send a light to shine upon my country.”  
--Esther Forero*

Transcending spaces, isolation, and marginalization through dance is an action based form of resistance that describes a moral value system. The assumptions that dance is illusive and an intangible art form is to some degree correct but by understanding the motivations and intentions of how practitioners perceive dances and tradition is another context where folkfeminism is a language that can form part of third world feminisms, one that expresses women’s liberation through an embodied knowledge. Women teach agency by tying personal and historical aspects that determine their life purpose as folklore pedagogues. The meaning of dance and song jointly determine a folkfeminism that centers on land and nature as unifying protagonist that opens spaces to crossing established boundaries of society. These embodied and voiced strengths are impassioned by a personal drive to express traditional knowledge to the public through educational venues. They bond historical bloodlines and ethnic mixtures that represent a blending of cultures whose knowledge comes from knowing the land and developing indigenous insight into establishing identities.

This research has provided examples of the meaning of folklore by cross referencing primary and secondary texts, autoethnographic and textual analysis as a way to explore the meaning of folkdances as acts of resistance by women but for many. The stories told in movement history of indigenous, African and European people has passed from one generation to the next, one society to the other and more specifically from teachers to students, each enacting and reenacting a philosophy of lore where knowledge has been retained on various stages of cultural performance.

The meaning of folkdance traditions from a critical third world feminist perspective involves critically understanding the public and private uses of romanticism, love of land, counter memory, solidarity, community and identity in order to assert a way of life for women who teach, practice and maintain tradition as a way of life. These women are active both in the classroom and in festive public performances, at home and in the workplace. Individuals that practice tradition choose to do so as a form of self liberation among economic constraints. Dance as a public and private cultural expression, as seen through the lives and textual analysis, attests to the power of performance through didactic principles where Caribbean coast regional autonomy represents Colombia internationally. These performances are examples of human acts of freedom among oppressive colonial systems and centralized government systems which continue to inform national and international culture as part of working class expressions. In other words, teaching national culture is an embodied practice of folkdance. These pedagogical processes of teaching dance combine physical consciousness, historical symbolisms and memory that are founded in human truths. People, both in public and private classroom spaces and in homes reenact and remake

their historical memory based on private and personal experience. As Luz Marina explains, “without artists we would not have Carnival.” An essential aspect to understanding folkdance reflects how women mold collective groups formed by passing knowledge where indigenous traditions are an embodied force.

### *Carnival*

The carnival experience begins in Cartagena with the agency negotiated by slaves, where mixtures of freedom and frustrations are brought to light by all caste systems. Carnival is also a central character on a social stage that can be personified as the infinite joke and the perpetual laughter between the working class and the elite, the attitudes of youth who engender the spirit and the attitudes of those who are politically vested in gaining space to preserve culture. The function of dance within carnival is a representational component that houses a public theatre that highlights winning battles, like the indigenous Farota who protected women against violence and rape by Spaniards. The Paloteo dance, war of 1810 independence dance, is also a new beginning for Colombian independence where flags are waved and sticks resonate as united staccato sounds. The Carnival motto “you have to live it to enjoy it” is simple yet difficult to depict lived realities through writing. The amusement, sadness and the gamut of emotion coming from watching children’s spontaneous expressions cannot be captured in a camera or in any theoretical explanation. The people have described Carnival as an intangible part of our existence, yet so many authors and researchers have spent years trying to grasp an art form that slips from our words and fingers. Both action packed and overwhelming in taste, sight, sound and touch, the missing spiritual element emanates with a deep reading of love and land as human agency that cannot be

self contained in a written formats. Much like Fanon (1984) expressed, when we are worn out by our lives in buildings, we will need to laugh and play as innocent children and the quest for spontaneity which is really a true sign of freedom by defying social conditions. Critical Folkdance Pedagogy functions similar to a child-like endeavor, but with a clear purpose in mind to reevaluate rigid structures. On this level dance does not seek closure, acknowledgment or legitimacy because the active presence of dance is already a political performance that can be perceived as a mechanism to attain the radical pedagogy of education.

Within the last year, I have heard two presentations by teachers who share best practices for teaching refer to Cumbaya as the classic example of what needs to be avoided within the classroom. What do they mean by that? Are instructors also oppressed? How has it become a bad word that symbolizes an aversion to practicing classroom peace and solidarity? The archaic meaning of the word, if understood in other critical terms and conditions is a loaded action based practice that can produce a reaction and/or reflection as to how our bodies have been colonized and what is deemed appropriate behavior in the classroom. The scope of this project redirects the focus of dance through various theoretical lenses in order to situate the complexity of a journey for all women involved in this project to establish a possibility of classroom practices as a project of interdisciplinary, grass roots, global, and comparative pedagogies that depend on the leadership and courage of professors. Supplying practical teaching materials in order to integrate critical folkdance pedagogy into the classroom is too broad in scope for this project but my main objective has been to provide a more conscious way of perceiving dance both historically, performatively, practically,

theoretically in a respectful style that integrates various voices into a praxis of folkdance.

Carnival is a figurative idea of an unfinished resolve that implores not to find apertures to what is always already an understanding of a perfect union among so much cultural mixture. The fluctuating time spaces attest to the fluidity and constancy of nature, the symbol of a non-linear mode of thought. The creativity that bursts out of carnival is a renovation of the archaic and a practical satire that combines music, words and dance into a yearly project of healing. Healing comes out through the use of color, of old African and native rituals of fire, water, land and wind with a new land and mestizo body.

On the surface, a national culture stands on its own, with complicated undertones of visual usurpations, modes of entertainment and exotic attraction has replaced the more innocent nostalgia of laughter and joy seeking audiences. The commercialization of Carnival tends to overshadow the meaning of dances as a practice of social consciousness and rather cloaks a false consciousness of happiness. In the poem "Carnival," as in many other texts, emotions become central agents that gauge the attitude of festive experience. Incessant laughter subverts inspiration. Speaking of sadness and mourning does not align with selling pleasure to those who seek overindulging in visual entertainment and sensational experience. The nostalgic, the mourning, the at times painful processes of growth and identity is a perspective of Carnival that has been overlooked, one that connotes personal drive of people's everyday struggles.

Since carnival establishments are obliged to attract massive crowds each year making the folkdance ritual, with the constant repetition and imitation, lose spontaneity due to the organized expectations of what comprises carnival. For instance, Unicarnival negotiates meaning with Carnival S.A. enterprise. Revisiting dance and determining what is at stake is an almost intangible project due to the range of purpose and human interaction. The conflicts that arise as part of a male dominated culture tend to showcase the exotic as cultural expressions to maintain a social order. The festive also depends on how women contribute to maintaining traditional roles on the stages of folkdance and aspiring to a more just method of social (re)conditioning. On a broader scale Carnival profits society through cultural capital in order to sustain economic demands for those in power. Carnival culture depends on the knowledge of dance where the dialectic between the two is an amalgam of social liberties and social injustices. The aim in this study has been to highlight women's truths as those who make meaning through folkdance. Moreover, teachings strategies of women directors who uphold folk culture are driven by a personal sense of fulfillment and duty to perform and be heard through dance. They struggle with the overarching controls of Carnival but must work against and within Carnival for sustenance. They are able to achieve their folkdance practices as directors and choreographers in public and private schools like Corporación Cultural de Barranquilla and Palma Africana. In public schooling, in INSTENALCO, these dances are a mainstream class, which engage students during assemblies and offers opportunities for regional and local competitions. Thus the support for Carnival as a festive society comes from establishing an educational foundation based on dance practices grounded in resistance yet normalized to fit the modern social conditions.

These conditions, more generally, are problematic and risky for women because their public position is magnified and the central role of being placed as an aesthetic attraction diminishes their unique voices and personal challenges into an amassed and glorified spectacle. On the other hand, individual dance troupes, *comparasas*, have their own established histories and their continuances depend on the meaning of tradition as a collective that, on a superficial level, shuffles from being herded as part of a grand Carnival commodity and on a personal level represents a space where women have separated themselves from their private homes as a freedom from oppression and economic dependency. On the contrary, the independence that arises out of folkdance practices is rooted in a symbolic understanding of presence, counter memory and symbolic interpretation of dance.

### *Dance Symbolism*

The symbolic integrity and completeness of a Cumbia wheel represents a young women's desire to participate as a leader, be publicly heard through motion as she moves out of private space and into a community where men and women share pleasure, unity, desire and communion. Some of the texts are projected through a male lens such as "Cumbia" and "Cumbia e Zulú y Mulato" because women's voices are mystified and lost as an object within the text. At present, Cumbia generalizes a peaceful union among difference and a joyful expression that respectfully reveres women, the natural attraction towards sensuality that becomes a process of knowing oneself. The attitude of dance, if 'correctly' performed according to my own experiences in Monica's classroom, must evoke confidence, pride, stability,

concentration, leadership; first with oneself, second with a partner, and finally within a community circle.

Cumbia, Bullerengue, and Mapalé represent the idea of a romantic and nostalgic reverence toward land that establishes territorial liberation from Spain. Human agency thus, requires linking land, counter memory, solidarity and community as a way to establish identity and a sense of belonging to a Caribbean coast identity. Much like the memory of freedom from slavery as a symbolic history of Carnival celebrations, Cumbia is a case in point that reflects the mixtures of postcoloniality and regional autonomy. The ocean fronts and natural divides also lend to sustaining a Caribbean culture that celebrates the festive performances of African, Native, and European meztizaje. Even among the exploitation of folkdance as a part of selling and marketing and entertainment for government controlled Carnival Enterprises, the historic memory embedded in songs, dances and symbols are the social fabric that has merited an unfolding of folkdance as a critical pedagogy. Cumbia and Bullerengue are danced and voiced interpretations whereas Mapalé reflects the unspoken joy and embodiment of inner spiritual development among women. Moving the body to the sounds of the Mapalé expresses an inner strength that is evident by the movement of freedom and the freedom of movement joined in benevolent type of embodied action that survived colonial oppression of African cultures in Cartagena.

#### *Chanted Dances as a Feminist Communities*

The push and pull of dance origins is indiscernible because dance is also a politics of choice, of choosing what merits a place in remembering and forgetting. The wanting of freedom, land and now voice has come to the forefront as part of engaging



in dance pedagogy. Nature's womb, motherhood and birth is a summit of knowledge that gains respect among women singers, song writers and dancers.

Bullerengue, grew as a feminist expression, similar to the Cumbia, but maintains women's expressions through both song and dance. The difficulties of work lives, social oppressions, and the challenges of motherhood are represented in the chanted traditions of cantoras Martina, Etelvina Maldonado and Totó la Momposina. Martina exemplifies the union between chanted dance and the emotional freedom and liberation that she experiences on the beach front. She embodies the voice and the songs of freedom learned from her father. Poetic romanticism in her songs juxtaposes the struggles against being a traveling female artist which has caused conflict with family as she breaks traditional roles by singing and traveling in public spaces to practice her chanted dances known as Tambora music. The demand for popular music at music festivals makes it difficult for Alé Kuma tradition to gain regional support. Now that Alé Kuma has international support, the grassroots traditions will be sold abroad and mass produced for international audiences all over the world. As Martina expressed, "my music can be found abroad but my own people do not know us." The day we met, she handed me her last demo of *Alé Kuma* (2004), and I bought *Tambora: Baile Cantado en Colombia* (2003). The authentic expressions heard in these chanted dances begin with the working classes, on the margins, by the ocean, dancing. The ideas are appropriated by international consumers and exposed to upper classes, creating the constant cycle of transformation, much like the Samba, Salsa, Merengue, Cumbia, and many other dances in third world countries. The experience of Tambora music, as Martina expresses, takes us out of this world and into another, seemingly blissful.

A problem for women folksingers, like Martina and Esther, are present and active on the stage of folklore, a disjuncture between national and international performance is driven by the entertainment industry. Where Martina has had success internationally, Esther has gained local success and represents Colombia as a true patriot of Barranquilla, lover of land, girlfriend and faithful poet of Barranquilla, a position that goes unrecognized internationally from my own experiences with Esther. The exotic and the different, the raw nature of folkdance is appealing to the international spectator. Folkdances, much like any other grassroots dance undergoes changes and shifts as they are sold to the international audiences. What appear to be original and raw forms of people's expression on an international stage is appropriate and arranged to benefit the music and entertainment industry. Although change is adaptable, as Carmen expressed, there are certain elements that are essential representations that surface as an expected attitude during performances. Much like the Cumbia movement to Mexico during the big band craze, the popularity and survival of Mexican Cumbia resembles the popularity and survival Colombian Cumbia. The differences and origins are not of primary importance rather the similar counter histories demonstrate that people have chosen to retain these specific traditions.

Being public figures, in the case of Carmen and Martina, forces them to handle exploitation and corruption from the marketing and music industry both regionally and abroad. As Carmen stated, only one person at a time, this is the way we can change and challenge the system. Change in folkdance is inevitable and acceptable though still a negotiation between working class to express street, staged and classroom cultures and the elite.

*Esther*

A demand to appreciate and love the land is embedded into Esther Forero's folksongs. Her on-going message and her professional career exemplify an urgency by the people to reconnect with the land and the natural world. She stands on this principle of solidarity and the city of Barranquilla embraces her purpose of liberation through love. Her pedagogy of song is a union of Cuban, Puerto Rican and Colombian Caribbean cultures that resonate through the rhythms that represent the voices that are projected not only as an individual artist but also an artist that has positioned her voice that represents the basis of social freedoms in establishing a Caribbean identity. La Guacherna celebrations, her travels to Cuba and Puerto Rico and friendships with Rafael Hernandez and Jorge Artel are mixtures of folklore that resonate in songs. The performances are the drum beats and the rising of marginalized subculture identities where figurative literary references evoke a sense of an almost lost, a longing to maintain a romantic view of a forgotten territory, hidden beaches, winding rivers and tropical lands that reverberate with a new identity. Her life's work represents an intimate relationship with the city. Due to her low-income status, immigration and border controls denied her entry into the United States for an all expense paid tribute to her music in Miami. Her emotive responses to challenging these cultural barriers of asserting folklore, almost as a response to foreign policy where Colombia has been globally ostracized, she brings our attention back to the beauty of a paradisiacal land connoted in "Friend from any part of the world." The practical utility and contribution of folksong and dance upholds a politics of land and country that promotes a sense of belonging to a greater whole, it promotes a sense of freedom and liberation from

everything material without losing sight of how it has been historically oppressed sold and internationally exported. In the case of Colombia, Esther pleads for the world to take another look at this land because it is not a land of death, blood, struggle, sadness, hate and cries. Her sung portrait is romanticized to symbolize the potential of hope for indigenous Colombians who love the land.

### *The Body*

As we see through the lives of Carmen, Luz, and Monica, understanding the (re)evolutionary drive of women who resist the overarching hierarchical structures through folklore practices involves a multilayered interpretive analysis where the embodiment of dance is a form of women's resistance.

The self-engaged body, appearance and distinct movements create a behavior that impacts women's sense of relating to others and themselves. Belonging and identity as expressed through movement history is physical proof that the processes of liberation is deliberate and on-going. As Monica and Luz explain, transformation and self awareness are reconceptualized for girls. They begin to experiment with their bodies and relate to others non-verbally. Eye contact, physical consciousness, dedication and persistence have been a personal trait both for the teachers and the knowledge passed on to students. Dance becomes a philosophy as a life changing process. Because we must rely on our present moment to understand and be conscious of how thought and movement, to express a story, are synchronized in order to produce sensations that give a multilayered understanding of how we, as individuals, fit into the society. Teaching dancers to become dancers is a slow process. Luz Marina begins her teachings with what students already know, like Reggaeton, Salsa, and Merengue. Once

students feel confident moving their bodies as a group, trust is built within the class dynamic. She introduces the movements, the sequences and the rhythms as she explains the socio-historic significance of why their ancestors danced the Mapalé, Bullerengue, Cumbia, Farota and so many other folkdances that are still practiced in her classroom. The pedagogical process of social transformation comes in stages and when represented in its most respectable forms, asserts determination, dedication and vision. Once students feel it for themselves, they want to learn more, but taking that first step, especially for male dancers, has become a challenge. The traditional female/male roles when dancing do not convey messages of submission and dominance, a theory of social progress relies on flirting. Despite the condescension of machismo, and the need for women to break out as individual voices is adamantly needed, women choose to dance with other women like in Bullerengue, with men and even alone if the community does not respond.

Where folkdancing as practice is a feminist endeavor as liberation of movement, travel and inner explorations as women breaks boundaries between public and private spaces, this is an interpretation about men and women, not only women. For example, Luz is concerned about the lack of male dancers in public schools. Parents are sending kids an image that it is an effeminate practice and they encourage boys to be involved in physically competitive sports like soccer and basketball. Although male participation is declining, Luz Marina's research, funded by the Ministry of Education, seeks to remedy the decline of male participation in public schools. The presentation of folkdance is not about men or women, it is about everyone. The verisimilitude in folkdancing, because of its historical realities, are about union between men and women, not always, but in

many cases dances were about forming and establishing new relationships, among individuals, groups and communities. National school competitions are an example of how regions establish regional autonomy yet also share varying folkloric histories that represent Colombia's national culture. Public school folkdance directors both organize the events and direct their folkdance team, where counter histories continue to be practiced at national school festivals and competitions.

These performances are universal representations of humanity on a level of physical resilience and creative interpretation but becoming a professional dancer, like Monica and Luz, has made them international ambassadors that represent Colombia. After traveling the world and dancing for President Clinton and the Emperor of Japan and other world leaders, they are political diplomats that demonstrate an aspect of third world cultures, of women's cultures in a non-traditional way to keep peaceful ties and to share an idea of community with other nations. In the east, some of these same traditions were considered an acts of submission to colonizing governments. This is not the case for women folkdance practitioners, who on the contrary hold a national memory through traditional pedagogies. The proof of historical agency moves from one person, one class, one community, one region and one nation at a time. Luz's pedagogy is in memory of her Palenque ancestors, the first established region of freed slaves in the 16th century.

Monica, who struggled with her body image and family support, says as a director, it is not how you look but what you know that enables you to become successful. The implications of showing women's bodies as a part of carnival also heightens the physical obsessions that respond to the demands of keeping an image of

femininity, the performances maintained a level of integrity, mostly always valued and respected during the specific performances. The accepted quality of folkdances and the respect for women's sensuality is one that represents pride of our bodies within and among various social conditions.

Her year round performances indicate that folkdance persists as a year round practice. Folkdance is a way of life that does not provide enough economic security although she continues to embrace productions of folkdance locally and internationally. These pressures are balanced in an embodied understanding of how our bodies move into and out of public and private spaces. How confidence is learned through dance and the body is one of Monica's contributions. Dance educators teach self-confidence and courage within classroom spaces where youth face insecurities and grow from interacting with their bodies, exposing their bodies that are inevitably judged aesthetically.

As Monica stated, some dances like Mapalé and Cumbia transcend time and are felt every time they are played. The unspoken forms of dance have no written laws and they are based off of presence and community to remember the many forms of how humans relate to the natural world. Community signifies ancestors and living relatives. Presence is required through the body and through a universal knowing about connecting with nature in spite of the forces from patriarchal dominance and oppression.

Women's practices uphold traditions that retain a grass roots perspective despite economic pulls and hardships; the essence is present even among the constraints of marketing carnival culture, women's bodies through ethnic representations of dance.

Women like Esther, Martina, Luz, Monica and Carmen have provided insight into the multiple realities of their lives through folklore and folkdance. A clash between the content of the meanings of dances as ancestral matrices juxtaposed to their lived material realities are unquestionable. The personal conviction of their purpose and who they are as public intellectuals of dance make their voices, bodies and Caribbean region essential as feminist identities. In a Caribbean region in the north with a centralized government in the interior of Colombia, the trickling down of monetary distribution for all public institutions like schooling and national cultural performances, like Carnival enterprises does not compensate those who are the doers, hacedores or practitioners of folklore. These bearers of tradition are primarily women who attest to the economic inequality but who also regardless of monetary compensation, continue to perform and teach others.

Memories are individual histories that are passed along from teacher to student, mother to daughter, from those ancestors who have died to those who are living. The life and death processes of folkdance as pedagogy focuses more on how lives are lived and the spiritual act of passing this knowledge. In addition, Carmen's predecessors have also left her the gift of Bullerengue as a nostalgic song and dance, African drums of a spiritual nature that resonate in the melancholy tone of survival and longing to be heard. "Everything is memory of something" she adds as she carries the memory of Pacho Galán and Maestro Escorcía, "he gave me his drums." In her Bullerengue song "I'll tell the whole world that he who leaves does not come back. You and my companions, I give you music." The legacy of music and drums carries traditions not only within families but also as teachers and students of music.



Folkfeminism has its history rooted in an attitude of life giving, life producing and life sustaining through natural elements. The memory of traditions tied to the land are commitments that rest on an idea that like Miguel Chajin connotes, Cumbia is a personified "you," one that "spills my sweat through my brown skin of the Magdalena river." The people who know its meaning and are inextricably linked to the labored lives of the working class who not only consider the Cumbia an escape from the everyday but also as a lifeline of what it means to belong. A nostalgic process of marginalized experiences of holding on to loss, spilling, burning, suffering and hiding, are expressions of dance that arise within the tucked away areas along the seashore margins. Similarly, Etelvina's message gives rise to a rebirth to a new land after it has suffered a loss, "if the pasture burns, let it burn, it will spring again." Martina also sings of a freedom of finding one's place throughout the borderless countryside.

The dance is like a carousel, as Artel writes, of non materialized forms of femininity linked to the earth. The amalgam of matriarchal symbols has an encoded language embedded in the Bantú traditions of the Barileke mask. The elephant symbol represents a matriarchal community representative of the power of procreation whereby female elephants are the herd leaders because they are responsible for choosing male elephants based on virile strength. The marimonda mask parallels the symbolism of an elephant yet also mimics the exaggerated phallus and the sacred feminine as a symbology of the Virgin María as its balancing counterpart.

The natural world also coexists in meanings and depictions in the sombrero vueltaio. The landscapes and social histories are a Zenú tradition where language of weaving palm leaf exemplifies a knowledge system of multiple dimensions. Tribal

groups, status, and a balance of dualisms is reflected in the symmetry of the black and cream-colored contrasts as a three dimensional parchment for interpreting history. The hat used as a practical guard against the equator sun for land workers, is Colombia's international symbol. The Sombrero Vueltiao trademark will soon be reaching a first world audience.

*Zenú Sombrero Vueltiao and Golf?*

On my way back home through Spirit airlines in Cartagena, I sat down at the pastry shop to drink my last guanabana juice and empanada. "Is this seat taken?" A middle-aged Caucasian man also wants to comfortably savor the last morsel before getting on the plane. He comes to Cartagena quite often, it is his favorite hangout, even better than the Philippines. After chatting, he says he is here on business.

"What are you selling?"

He pulls out his collection of Vueltiao hats, but this time they are not black and white, they are also brown and peach. He asks for my advice, I look through his stack. "This one." I dug it out. "This one is nice for women," I responded. (The same one I am currently using here in Cancun). This hat was intended for a man to wear out in the fields, but now we can wear them doing nothing on the beach, hmm, progress.

"I am buying boat loads of these hats to sell to the golf industry in the states. We could put a ribbon around it for the ladies but this hat protects you well from the sun, the best I have ever seen."

"It lasts a thousand lifetimes if not more," I reply wondering if this exaggeration might be realistic. My father still has the same one since I can remember. They are keepers.

“Here, you like that one? You can have it, take it please.”

“Sure thing, thanks. Without a doubt these will be successful” I remarked.

Turning it down never crossed my mind because I had intended to buy one for myself anyway.

“Do you know their origin?” I am not sure if origin makes a difference anymore at this stage in the game. An appreciation of the hat made me proud because its survival remembers the people. He was anxious to get more of a lecture from me. I said I would email him the information: *Villadiego 2001, Imperio de la cultura Zenú*. I have not done so yet. First because such a universal idea that naturally moves with time does not need a patent nor does it need a market to maintain its existence. Folklore, a universal understanding, stands the test of time because simplicity is genius. Though Mr. Good, (and that is really his name) was eager to make sure the Zenú would receive proper credit, people’s memory have already accredited the hat by their own standards of measurement, by knowing that these universal secrets are not to be left unturned. Creativity, practicality and indigenous philosophy are recorded not only in your head but in keeping true to the perpetual joke, on your head too! Either by dancers or golfers alike. Either way, the sombrero is legacy of Cumbia a symbol of Zenú and maybe a golfer’s delight.

### *The Challenges*

The contemporary challenges as a form of resistance in light of a critical consciousness should be more aware of the implications for women and men which include paying more attention to the implications for young women and the messages that are impeding growth due to the fixation of the exotic. Secondly, groups are

politicizing better economic distribution for the practitioners of Carnival folkdance groups from government run Carnival enterprises but at present more work needs to be done, as stated by Carmen. Also, whether or not international consumers understand the significance of dances is of minimal importance, rather, the integrity of the dances and of how women project their bodies for their own benefit relocates control back to the individual. Economic inequality due to capitalism, consumerisms, tourisms, globalisms, and local constraints are always in contention and regarded as a massive grouping of popular culture theory that are central force. In addition, the concept that national and regional controls are guiding people, deemphasize that people are responsible for their own history making, their actions and cultural formation. Folkdancing is an expression of a people's democracy, where dancing bodies and singing voices have spoken their human truths for thousands of years. These are all necessary frictions between a knowledge that is passed down from one generation to the next and the global pulls that in effect, strengthen the attitudes and intentions of folkdance as ethnic freedoms as well as national and regional symbols for the countries they represent. Taking a deeper look into the historical contextual and active forms of dancing is a pedagogical process that centers itself and by default decenters dominant paradigms because dances are acts of survival for those who practice, embody and teach them. The performative aspects of people's folkdancing in Barranquilla have continually been a process of agency, history making and remembering the grass roots traditions of community and spirituality. Folkdance as a folkfeminist endeavor is applicable to other geographical spaces, which means that folkdance, as a complete work of study is not a topic that can be researched in libraries or by ethnographies of other people's lives in order for it to stand a chance

to be revisited and remembered. This subject in the U.S. can be remembered only if it was previously practiced and even then, it is only meant to be remembered or enacted through action, peace and community.

While the government provides resources to Carnival enterprises, instead of distributing a more equitable amount to the hacedores, a patriarchal order will continue to be driven by competition and a demand for entertainment economic resource for the society. Although resistance by some of the women are active among the centralized government, the imbalances between competitions of folkdances and the on one hand and the personal impetus to continue tradition regardless of economic inequality is a quality of that that transcends the material base of the society. The women are aware of these imbalances and they have a function that stems from the demand to instruct students to embody traditions within various principles of right conduct, authentic representation, discipline, historical consciousness that, nonetheless, must also moves in and out of a broader dynamic of tourism and modern festive productions. Within the private and public school classrooms, dance success has a cultural value where its purpose is a venue for student growth and character formation especially for women. Its existence as a common base of a society indicates that strength in the working class and in the margins has been long-lasting despite colonial and postcolonial oppressions.

Dancing has been forbidden by dominant power systems either by colonizing indigenous histories, establishing strict religious doctrines that limit dance and limiting women's bodies for entertainment. Judeo Christian religions brought in by imperialism have not been successful at eliminating an essential part of human expression, nor has it been successful in many other regions of the third world. Changing our rationale and

understanding of dance includes becoming more reflexive and aware of the reasons we have ignored dance in our society so that we can begin to speak about and learn from the attitudes of a dancing society in hopes of advancing a politics of peace. As a society, we can accurately measure when the time has come to integrate dance back into our social fabric when we find ourselves dancing alone. Then we must reconsider teaching dance to others, on layman's terms, as a goal for creating a space to heal and celebrate within.

### Conclusion

In sum, critical folkdance pedagogy as an educational tool has the potential to function as a spatial and corporeal practice. The cultural bridges between different individuals, classroom cultures, national culture, and Western traditions has not placed sufficient importance to dance, the body, and movement as a fundamental practice for the formation of an individual; one that entails experiences of liberation from otherwise limiting educational environments. The integral formation of an individual must develop the know-how for engaging self and other. Valuing the teaching of movement through critical folkdance practices implies a conscious shift in the importance of the body as a practice of liberation, as well as addresses the limitations and confinements of traditional learning environments. This is exemplified in the following ways:

1. Branches out into exploring the indoor and outdoor classroom environments as a space for exploring the movement of the body.
2. Folkdance provides various interdisciplinary approaches that intersect with women and girls' expressions, ethnic expressions, and cultural contexts shaped by experiences of marginalization.

3. Explores social relations through dance. For example, the comfort level of how boys, girls, and adults respond to teaching dance movement is a good starting point for bridging differences.

4. Critical Folkdance Pedagogy comes from a basic human need to move creatively, succinctly, and respectfully as a way for individuals to identify with a classroom, group, community, region, or any space where dances are formed.

5. Values and respects the body as a central point for identifying how various social constructions play out in the classroom through movement in the construction of knowledge.

6. Complicates Western values that are explicitly and implicitly taught and learned through dance.

7. Dance offers an inter-corporeal communication that serves as a vehicle for communication between self and other.

8. Dance is an art form, an expression of community, and ultimately a shared space of communication where community building and collective relationships can form.

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## APPENDIX A

### FOLKDANCE VIDEOCLIPS

The DVD includes examples of folkdances taken during performances of **Cooperación Cultural de Barranquilla, Palma Africana** and in **Instituto Técnico Nacional de Comercio**. Dances include **La Farota, La Cumbia, El Mapalé, El Bullerengue, El Garabato, El Paloteo**.

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