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Lo Cotidiano: A Key Element of *Mujerista* Theology

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The women around the world who have birthed women-centered liberation theologies have done so against immense odds. Absolutely nothing has deterred us, however, for what guides and inspires us are the lives of our mothers, sisters, daughters, women lovers, friends. Very many of their lives, like very many of ours, are illuminated by the struggle to survive and flourish in spite of many obstacles. To elaborate our women-centered theologies we have had to invent different ways of listening to each other, of understanding knowledge and religion and their functions. Audre Lorde taught us early on that unless we created new methods for doing theology we would not effectively dismantle the traditional ways of theology that have excluded women and our religious understandings and practices for ages.¹ Much less could we develop our theologies using the same theories, criteria, and sources that men theologians have used. This is why we have developed new methods and theories. We have gone even farther and have re-conceptualized theories, understanding them as “contingent hypotheses, constructed not found, that need to be tested and continually revised.”²

This constructive task led us to recognize the faith of the people as the source of our theologies; not an abstract faith but the faith that sustains grassroots people in their daily living. Indeed, women-centered liberation theologies consider of great importance the lived-experiences of women, of the most oppressed women in our communities who struggle to survive and flourish constantly. In *mujerista* theology we have developed a method that provides opportunities for and enables

¹ Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Sister Outsider* (Trumansburg, N.Y.: The Crossing Press, 1984) 110–3.

² Sheila Greeve Davaney, “Introduction,” in *Horizons in Feminist Theology—Identity, Tradition, and Norm*, eds. Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997) 3.

grassroots Latinas to speak about themselves and their religious understandings and practices. We have also created ways to bring their voices to "official" theological arenas and we have insisted that Latinas must be heard and that their lived-experience must be taken into consideration.

The work we *mujerista* theologians have done with grassroots Latinas has taught us that the horizon of Latinas lived-experience is, first and foremost, the everyday, *lo cotidiano*. We have come to see the importance of *lo cotidiano* of Latinas in such a way that we believe it has to be at the heart of *mujerista* theology and we contend that it is of importance to all liberation theologies and struggles. Without clear knowledge of what *lo cotidiano* is and how it functions, we will continue maybe to refer to it but we will not give it the full importance it has for theology and all liberative praxis. That is why in this article we turn our attention to *lo cotidiano*, the day-to-day reality in which Latinas lived-experience is enmeshed.

The Importance of lo cotidiano

The elaborations about the meaning, function and importance of *lo cotidiano* presented in this article clarify the presuppositions that ground our claims regarding Latinas' lived-experiences as the source of *mujerista* theology, a liberation theology from the perspective of Latinas living in the U.S. They help us to understand better the issues at stake in such a claim and connect it to other theological and theoretical proposals having to do with sources, stories and narratives.

More important than all of this, however, is the need for our theological endeavors to contribute effectively to women's liberation. This is a central criterion of *mujerista* theology and our exploration of *lo cotidiano* has been instigated by this requirement, an obligation imposed on us by the dangers women suffer all around the world. Thus what motivates us is the necessity to contribute effectively to the liberation of women.

What do we have to do to contribute effectively to the liberation of Latinas and of women all around the world? There is no doubt that we have to be committed to radical structural change while at the same time attending to particular situations, even if only in a temporary way. Yet, as one looks back over the last four decades one sees little change in structures of oppression. Although some few changes have taken place, most of them are without lasting effect. Today we have slid back when it comes to issues of ethnic prejudice/racism and sexism. Struggles regarding economic oppression have not made significant headway either. As a matter of fact, the percentage of poor people in the world

today is larger now than it was in the 1960s and the gap between those of us who have and those who do not have is broader than ever.

The main reasons structural changes have not come about or lasted, I wish to suggest, derives from the fact that structural change has not been seen as integrally related to *lo cotidiano*. To correct this, I insist, it is time we listen to Latinas and other grassroots women around the world and, drawing from their wisdom, that we conceptualize structural change in a different way than has been understood in the past. This does not mean ceasing to work on changing family structures, work-related structures, the economic structures of our societies, political structures, church structures. However, following the insights of grassroots women, structural change must be rooted in *lo cotidiano*. Unless the changes we struggle to bring about impact the organization and function of *lo cotidiano*, structural change will not happen, and, if it happens, it will not last. We want to be clear that it is not a matter of either/or. We certainly must continue to organize, to bring about changes in the way politicians are chosen, how multinational corporations operate, how the churches control what is considered orthodox. Those changes, however, cannot be conceived or brought about apart from the question, "What change will this bring to the everyday lives of poor and oppressed women?"³ Maybe it is time to give up grandiose plans for sweeping changes and to realize that even if those changes were accomplished they will not last unless they bring about change at the level of *lo cotidiano*.

The few structural changes that have happened seem not to have affected much the everyday lives of grassroots people. They have not reached what is immediate to people; they have not solved the problems of the here and now. These few structural changes "did not warm tenderly dreamed hopes, did not interchange favors, did not open spaces for the gratuitous, for the spontaneous, for fantasy; they did not calm hatred, desire, vengeance, nor the frequent desire to end one's life."⁴

³ Structural changes proposed by different movements start with universal principles that try to mold societies accordingly. Whether these structural changes follow socialist or capitalist principles, for example, the insistence on principles as the foundation for structural changes leads to an aprioristic claim of validity that ignores the actual *cotidiano* of grassroots people and often exclude whole sectors of society. By insisting on *lo cotidiano* we are proposing that all principles need to be submitted to a criterion of effectiveness for people's struggles for liberation. See Franz, Hinkelammert, "Por una sociedad donde quepan todos," in *Por una sociedad donde quepan todos*, Cuarta Jornada Teológica de CETELA, ed. José Duque (San José: DEI, 1996) 364-5.

⁴ Ivone Gebara, *Teología a ritmo de mujer* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Dabar, 1995), 121. This is my translation from the Spanish edition of this work, which is itself a translation from the Portuguese.

The struggles for structural change as they have been carried out since the 1960s have not done "battle against the absurd incremental gains of the forces that destroy life, which undermine *lo cotidiano* in many ways."⁵ I believe that the main reason proposals for structural changes have not taken *lo cotidiano* into consideration is that we have not stopped to see its importance, to grasp its meaning. The task at hand, then, is to offer some markers for remedying our faulty understanding of *lo cotidiano*.

The Meaning of lo cotidiano

Lo cotidiano is a complex concept not easily defined. This does not mean that it is something imprecise or that it refers to anything and everything. Due to the complexity of *lo cotidiano* it is better to describe rather than define it so as to point out its many elements and characteristics. *Lo cotidiano* constitutes the immediate space of our lives, the first horizon in which we have our experiences, experiences that in turn are constitutive elements of our reality. *Lo cotidiano* is where we first meet and relate to the material world that is made up not only of physical realities but also is made up of how we relate to that reality (culture), and how we understand and evaluate that reality and our relationship with it (history). *Lo cotidiano* is necessarily entangled in material life and is a key element of the structuring of social relations and its limits. *Lo cotidiano* situates us in our experiences. It has to do with the practices and beliefs that we have inherited, with our habitual judgments, including the tactics we use to deal with the everyday. However, by *lo cotidiano* we do not refer to the acritical reproduction or repetition of all that we have been taught or to which we have become habituated. On the contrary, we understand by *lo cotidiano* that which is reproduced or repeated consciously by the majority of people in the world as part of their struggles for survival and liberation. This is why this conscientized *cotidiano* carries with it subversive elements that can help us to question the reality in which we live.⁶ *Lo cotidiano* has much to do with the experiences we have lived, with experiences that have been analyzed and integrated into our understandings and behaviors. It is what makes the world of each and every one specific, and, therefore, it is in *lo cotidiano* and starting with *lo cotidiano* that we live the multiple

⁵Gebara, *Teología a ritmo de mujer*, 121.

⁶In other words, we are not suggesting that a conscientized *cotidiano* is one that supports this or that ideology but one that describes, relates to, and identifies the reality of grassroots people.

relations that constitute our humanity. It is the sphere in which our struggle for life is most immediate, most vigorous, most vibrant.

Lo cotidiano is what we face everyday and it includes also how we face it. In no way should *lo cotidiano* be seen as belonging mostly to the private world. *Lo cotidiano* is in contact on a regular basis with social systems; it impacts their structures and mechanisms. *Lo cotidiano* refers to the way we talk, with the impact of class, gender, poverty and work on our routines and expectations; it has to do with relations within families and among friends and neighbors in a community. It extends to our experience with authority, and our central religious beliefs and celebrations.⁷

Lo cotidiano is intrinsically linked with what we usually call common sense,⁸ and, therefore, we tend to see it as something natural. When we speak here about "natural" we are not referring to the philosophical naturalism that limits reality only to what the human mind can conceptualize but to the obviousness that the expression "of course" indicates. This sense of the naturalness of *lo cotidiano* points to the way it is enmeshed in the material world, in its concreteness and specificity.⁹ In *lo cotidiano* there is much "practical-ness" involved not in the pragmatic sense but in the "folk-philosophical sense of sagacity" that has to do with being prudent and levelheaded. Attention to *lo cotidiano* makes it possible for grassroots people to keep themselves from getting caught in situations they cannot effectively deal with or, failing that, *lo cotidiano* alerts them so they are at least not surprised. Much of this folk wisdom comes from the instincts of grassroots Latinas sharpened by their daily struggle for survival.¹⁰

Anyone who has worked with grassroots people knows about the "unmethodical-ness" of *lo cotidiano*, the ad hoc-ness of *lo cotidiano*.¹¹ This leads to what outsiders might consider inconsistency in the lives of Latinas, but in reality it has to do with the need to react immediately to what happens for, if not, one will probably be in danger. This unmethodical-ness is needed to deal with the unpredictability of Latinas' lives and of all those who have no power to control or change what happens to them, who can at best cope with what happens or survive in spite of it. Those who work with grassroots people marvel at the way

⁷Daniel Levine, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) 317.

⁸Clifford Geertz, "Common Sense as a Cultural System," in *Local Knowledge* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1983), 84ff. This description of *lo cotidiano* uses some elements of Geertz's analysis of common sense.

⁹Geertz, "Common Sense as a Cultural System," 85-86.

¹⁰Geertz, "Common Sense as a Cultural System," 87.

¹¹Geertz, "Common Sense as a Cultural System," 90.

they use every possible minute and how they manage to bring something out of nothing. Grassroots Latinas have a great capacity to pay attention to and to deal with a multitude of things at the same time.¹²

They do not have the luxury of dealing with problems one at a time because the majority of situations they face cannot wait for attention. Not to deal with them at once can be disastrous. Grassroots Latinas have the ability to see the connections that exist among things, elements, and people who are very different. They would dull this ability if they were more methodical and dealt with things in a deductive and systematic way. Many consider the Latina way disorderly, but in reality it is a way that indicates the importance of the intuitive and of being totally present to details. It is precisely details that constitute the core of reality, of life. It is important always to remember that the lives of grassroots people bring them daily face to face with a reality of vital importance, that has to do with their own well-being and that of those for whom they are responsible. They cannot take that well-being for granted. They have to procure it day after day.

Lo cotidiano refers to a simple world. It is a world where one has to take care of what is scattered along the surface minute by minute. The urgency of *lo cotidiano* often makes it necessary for one to leave the causes or reasons for later, a “later” that often does not come because the urgency of the present never diminishes. This does not mean that Latinas are not conscious of the reasons or causes of *lo cotidiano*, of the struggles they carry on to deal with it. Concretely that reality scattered along the surface means figuring out how to feed the family today, how to pay for the oil or gas they need to heat their homes today, how to get money to buy the medicine their children need today. When we say that *lo cotidiano* has to do with the simple reality of life we refer to those immediate necessities, to the crises that grassroots people have to face daily, and to the wisdom they show when, in some way or other, they survive.

Lo cotidiano, Reality, and Knowing

The importance of *lo cotidiano* is not only a matter of what it is, but also has to do with how one can or should use it. Our analysis of reality and knowing does not separate praxis from reflection, but, proceeding from a perspective of liberation, it privileges the poor and the oppressed. It recognizes them as “organic intellectuals,” to use Gramsci’s term, admirably capable of understanding and explaining their experiences and beliefs. This analysis of reality has as its goal not a mere compre-

hension of the meaning of reality but an apprehending and facing up to reality.¹³ The starting point, from a liberation perspective, is the experience of grassroots people. Those experiences, which deal with the substance and the form of *lo cotidiano*, is used in *mujerista* theology to construct a Latina narrative that helps us to understand better who we are as Latinas and to explore the hermeneutical and epistemological threads that give continuity to our lives.

Taking seriously the descriptive function of *lo cotidiano* makes it possible for new narratives to emerge, narratives created by the poor and oppressed who take charge of reality. In these narratives they find themselves and see themselves as moral subjects who exercise their right and power of self-definition. It is only when we are self-defining that we become historical subjects capable of conceiving future realities beyond the present. For the poor and the oppressed a new narrative, having continuity with the present but different from the normative one, is an important element of the process of conscientization. New narratives help us to see and to value parts of ourselves that we have ignored or that we do not know well, and they help us to know ourselves differently from the way oppressors define us. New narratives break the hegemony established mainly by men from the western and northern hemispheres, a hegemony that has contributed much to produce and maintain prejudices and oppressive structures, such as ethnic prejudice and racism, sexism and compulsive heterosexism, classism and material poverty.

The importance that *lo cotidiano* has in the narratives of grassroots Latinas helps us to recognize that people do not live or die for a creed or a belief. They need narratives that arise from their reality, that not only convince but motivate. That is to say, the descriptions of reality that are based on and fed by *lo cotidiano* have the capacity to move hearts in a way that laws, authoritarian dictates, and arbitrary exigencies do not have. There is a need for narratives that echo our reality, for it is through them that we learn to know ourselves as well as our lives and their moral aspects, and the relation that exists between the morality of human behavior and happiness or unhappiness.¹⁴

The importance of *lo cotidiano* is not limited to its descriptive function but also concerns what grassroots people think about themselves and what they do, the discourses they construct, and the roles and

¹³ Ignacio Ellacuría, “Hacia una fundamentación del método teológico latinoamericano,” *Estudios centroamericanos* 30:322-23 (Agosto-Septiembre, 1975) 419.

¹⁴ See Paul Ricoeur, “Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator,” in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdés (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) 425-37.

¹² Geertz, “Common Sense as a Cultural System,” 91.

norms that society imposes on them. *Lo cotidiano* has hermeneutical importance because it is marked by subjectivity and because we cannot but see it and understand it except from a singular perspective. *Lo cotidiano* is the lens through which we apprehend reality. This means that hermeneutics refers not only to the meaning reality has for us but goes well beyond the perspective we have about what happens, how we live, who we are. Hermeneutics deals with context, with the use of power and determining who the ones are who mold the shape of daily life. Hermeneutics has to do as much with promised results as with actual results, and these grassroots people cannot control. The hermeneutical function of *lo cotidiano* makes visible the day-to-day oppression of grassroots Latinas because it not only points out clearly discriminatory practices but it also un.masks those who benefit from them.¹⁵

This way of understanding the hermeneutical importance of *lo cotidiano* highlights the multiple intentions present, the way oppressive discourses and practices are reinforced while liberating ones are obstructed. The hermeneutical function of *lo cotidiano* makes one understand the materiality of communications, the connection that exists between discourse and action. It enables one to see the importance of the motivations for a given praxis. Hermeneutics explains the role in *lo cotidiano* of values, presumptions, "facts," "truths," strategies, settings, material means and intentions. This is why we cannot apprehend reality and face it without taking seriously the hermeneutical function of *lo cotidiano*.

Once one has grasped these descriptive and hermeneutical functions it is not hard to deduce the epistemological importance of *lo cotidiano*. This means that when we speak about *lo cotidiano* of grassroots people, we refer not only to their capacity to know but also the characteristics of their way of knowing. Since knowing has to do with apprehending and facing up to reality, epistemology has to deal with efforts to understand and express the how and why of life and of human beings. *Lo cotidiano* is not only the starting point for apprehending and facing up to reality but it also plays a key role in this whole process. This is why we cannot ignore it or relegate it to some unimportant dimension. The emphasis on *lo cotidiano* makes it possible for one to understand

¹⁵We are assigning a function to hermeneutics that goes beyond the usual one because we do not think one can deal with meaning if one does not face what is happening with it. We are amplifying the meaning of hermeneutics by assigning to it some of the functions of rhetoric. See, J.D.H. Amador, "Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics: A Failure of Theoretical Nerve," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66:1 (Spring, 1998) 39–57.

knowledge as a fragmentary, partisan, conjectural, and provisional reconstruction of reality.¹⁶

Knowledge is fragmentary. What we will know tomorrow is not the same as what we know today but it will stand in relation to what we know today. What we know is what we have found through our experiences, through the experiences of our communities of struggle. Even this must be checked against our own reality. What we know is always partisan: it is always influenced by our own values, prejudices, loyalties, emotions, traditions, dreams, and future projects.¹⁷ Our knowing is conjectural because to know is not to copy or reflect reality but rather to interpret in a creative way those relations, structures, and processes that are elements of what is called reality. Finally, *lo cotidiano* makes it clear that knowledge is provisional for it indicates in and of itself how transitory our world and we ourselves are.¹⁸

What interests us about *lo cotidiano* and what we have been referring to is not a matter of just another perspective. *Lo cotidiano* indicates that the poor and the oppressed understand and face reality in a different way from that of the powerful and privileged. The epistemological function of *lo cotidiano* indicates that the struggles of the poor and the oppressed taking place in the underside of history constitutes the place, the moment—the horizon—of grassroots people's knowledge of reality. There is a triple dimension to knowing reality: becoming aware/getting to know reality, taking responsibility for reality, and transforming reality (*hacerse cargo de la realidad, cargar con la realidad, encargarse de la realidad*).¹⁹

Becoming aware of, getting to know, reality means being in the midst of reality, and not merely facing an idea about it. It implies being among things through their material and active mediations. The descriptive function of *lo cotidiano* emerges from this aspect of knowing reality. The descriptions, stories, narratives about the experiences of *lo cotidiano* enable grassroots Latinas to know reality. Telling their stories helps Latinas to know and understand the reality that surrounds them instead of merely facing an idea about it or the meaning of things as other have purported them to be.

¹⁶Otto Maduro, *Mapas para la fiesta* (Buenos Aires: Centro Nuevo para la Promoción Social y Pastoral, 1992) 137.

¹⁷In *mujerista* theology we are very clear about our partisan perspective. We make a clear option for the perspective of Latinas based on the fact that we believe the Christian message of justice and peace is based on an option for the oppressed.

¹⁸I have here adapted Maduro's synthesis about knowledge. See *Mapas para la fiesta*, 136–8.

¹⁹This scheme is proposed by Ellacuría, 419

The second dimension, taking responsibility for doing something about reality, refers to the ethical character of reality. Human beings cannot evade real commitments but have to take upon themselves reality and what it demands. The hermeneutical function of *lo cotidiano* is closely related to this ethical dimension, which is why we have included as part of it values, truths and intentions. It is worthwhile repeating that one cannot know reality without examining the perspective from which we understand it, and one cannot understand that perspective without analyzing whose it is and whom it benefits.

The third dimension, transforming reality, refers to the fact that one of the characteristics of knowing is to become involved in what we know. We cannot talk about knowledge if we are not ready to take on what we consider to be real. The epistemological function of *lo cotidiano* concerns this precisely. *Lo cotidiano* is the principal horizon of the poor and the oppressed who, in order to survive, have to struggle to transform reality. It is the poor and the oppressed, mainly made up of women, who know reality in a unique way because they transform it when they manage to survive by somehow providing shelter, food, clothing, medicines for themselves and their families.

The Via Negativa: What lo cotidiano Is Not

What we have claimed about *lo cotidiano* carries much weight in struggles for liberation, which has to do with the creation and up keeping of structures that human beings need in order to develop to our fullest human potential. However, we must insist that *lo cotidiano*, even the conscientized *cotidiano*, is not the criterion we use to evaluate and decide what is unjust or just, what is oppressive or liberating. In other words, being part of daily life does not mean that a given praxis or value is necessarily a criterion in *mujerista* theology. It is only if *lo cotidiano* contributes to justice, to liberation, to the struggle for fullness of life for grassroots Latinas, that it can be considered just and liberating. It is only if it is a praxis that contributes to the struggle for liberation of the poor and the oppressed that *lo cotidiano* is good, correct, and salvific. To make *lo cotidiano* in itself a criterion, an ethical principle and norm, would be to idealize it. Yes, there is much that is good in daily life but there is also much that "obstructs understanding and tenderness, allowing an abundance of postures of self-defense to appear that are full of falsehoods, of lies, that turn *lo cotidiano* into a behavior that is not open to life."²⁰

²⁰Ivone Gebara, *Conoce-te a ti misma* (Sao Paulo: Ediciones Paulinas, 1991) 24. My translation from the Portuguese.

Having liberation as criterion means that we do not endorse a relaxed, vague, or loose morality as part of *lo cotidiano*. That type of morality is possible only for the powerful, for those who are so closed off in their social and political reality that they can live peacefully only with those who think as they do. Such individuals can live peacefully for they have the luxury of not needing to be open to others who know reality in a different way. A moral attitude that has as criterion satisfying the desires of the powerful is possible in the world of those who need only their own resources, of those who live ignoring the world that surrounds them. Because the powerful view the rest of humanity as something alien, they are incapable of conceiving new ideas, of creating different ways of organizing society; they are incapable even of understanding that if they do not change radically they will not be able to maintain for much longer the status quo that benefits them so much. They are incapable of seeing that the present capitalist system that undergirds their status and privileges carries within it the seeds of its own destruction.²¹

Neither do we see *lo cotidiano* as a category or theory in the essentialist, universalist and / or idealist sense of this word. *Lo cotidiano* is not something that exists *a priori* under the heading of which we can classify what happens daily. We do not understand *lo cotidiano* as a common experience, for to do so would mean that we do not take seriously the differences that exist among human beings and the way we experience and understand reality. Instead of thinking of common experiences we focus on shared experiences in an effort to respect the subjectivity and agency of each person. At the same time, we use "shared" instead of "individual" to point to the inter-relatedness that is intrinsic to *lo cotidiano*. We use "shared" experiences to emphasize that the way we experience and deal with *lo cotidiano* does have similarities. Furthermore, to recognize similarities among the experiences of grassroots Latinas contributes to an understanding of differences that is relational instead of oppositional and exclusionary. The focus on shared experiences also helps us to be conscious that Latinas are not unique, that we share and can learn much from other communities of struggle.

Lo cotidiano does not support an absolute relativism that ignores the shared experiences that are part of our lives. On the contrary, the centrality of *lo cotidiano* in historical processes that are radically liberating

²¹I recognize that this evaluation is enormously complex. Here I simply wish to point out that the need for ever-expanding markets, essential to capitalism, will undoubtedly in the long run destroy it. For markets to expand there must be people who consume in large quantities. Given the finite resources of our world, this need for some to consume so much goes hand in hand with reducing the number of people who can do so.

and the need to be in the midst of reality as a central element in knowing highlight our necessity to understand relativity better and to accept what we shall call, for lack of a better expression, responsible relativism.²² Responsible relativism is opposed to the objective universals that have under-girded many of the structures of oppression that exist in our world today. Responsible relativism, recognizing the presence of subjectivity in all human thinking and knowing, makes clear that whatever is considered objective is merely the subjectivity of those who have the power to impose it as normative. Responsible relativism helps us to see knowledge and truths as different explanations of reality, explanations not necessarily exclusive of each other but often in at least partial agreement. Such explanations do not necessarily do away with traditional ones or those elaborated by other communities. In responsible relativism it is very clear that those who endorse a certain version of reality have to be accountable in a specific and concrete way for those versions and the consequences they bring. Lastly, responsible relativism, based on the fact that it does not deny the viability of other possibilities, encourages the development of strategies that could be placed in common, that could be grounded in this or that explanation, that could contribute as much to the liberation of *this* community as to the liberation of another one. Yet responsible relativism never contributes to the liberation of any community at the expense of another one.

Concluding Comments

Much has been said of *lo cotidiano* not included here, and much yet needs to be said about how it functions and how important it is in bringing about structural changes. Two things have moved me in this endeavor. First, there is a need for women's voices to be heard and to be recognized as important. The work that women do, which is concentrated mainly in what is considered *cotidiano*, must be valued. I do not know any society in which women are valued sufficiently, in which we are considered as capable as men, in which the fact that we do more than half of the work needed for the survival of the human race is acknowledged. My insistence on *lo cotidiano* is a cry for the liberation of women. Second, what has moved me to heed *lo cotidiano* is the absolute need for radical changes in our world, in all parts of our world. Attempts

to implement radical change during the last forty years have failed because of a lack of attention and importance given to *lo cotidiano*. This conclusion is not an abstract one but one that has as its source my own experiences and the experiences so many grassroots women have shared with me.

Lo cotidiano embraces our struggles and our fiestas, our birthing, living and dying; *lo cotidiano* extends to our loving and, tragically, to our hating. *Lo cotidiano* is nurtured by our religious beliefs, the political, our utopias, and those eschatological glimpses we perceive when we are able to take a few steps towards justice. We create *lo cotidiano* when we walk, when we dance, when we work, when we make love. So, let us not forget *lo cotidiano* when we struggle for liberation. Let us not forget *lo cotidiano* as an intrinsic element of women-centered liberation theologies.

²²What I call "responsible relativism" is an adaptation of the ideas of feminist philosopher Lorraine Code. She does not use this phrase and the following development of this term is not based on her ideas. See Lorraine Code, *Rhetorical Spaces—Essays on Gendered Locations* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 185–207.