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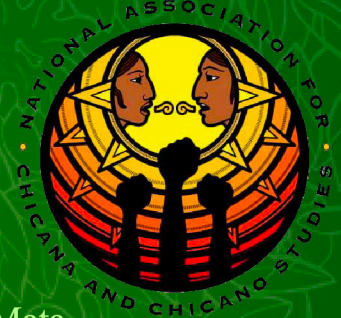
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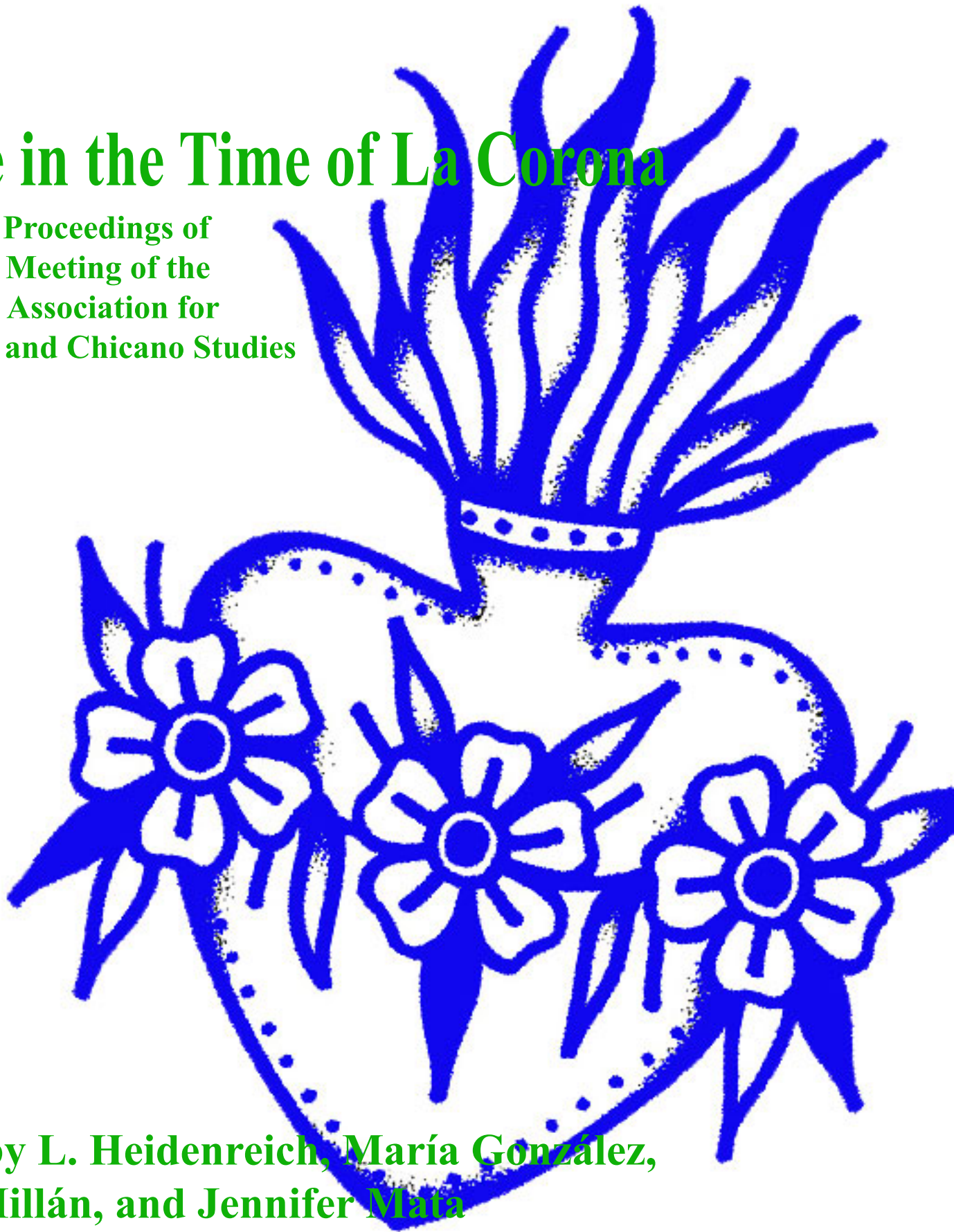
Love in the Time of La Corona



Edited by L. Heidenreich, María González, Isabel Millán, and Jennifer Mata

Love in the Time of La Corona

Selected Proceedings of
the 2021 Meeting of the
National Association for
Chicana and Chicano Studies



Edited by L. Heidenreich, María González,
Isabel Millán, and Jennifer Mata

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On Love, Covid, and Scholarship

L Heidenreich

While so many of us, especially in rural areas, look forward to seeing old friends and colleagues at the national conference, this year NACCS 2021 brought us together as a virtual community. It was not the same. Many of us were able to take a break from online teaching, at least for a couple of days, yet there were no embraces, hallway pláticas causing us to be “late for the next session,” or dances with old friends and new. Yet come together we did. Reaching out amid loss and todavía in struggle, we shared scholarship and strategies and, amid the struggle—joy. Papers, poetry, and plenaries called us to action, even while we battled, each of us on our own campuses, in our own towns, with our own losses. Together we moved forward, renewed with the love of, and labor of, our colegas and communities.

Our NACCS 2021 Proceedings reflect a year of struggle. For many of us, isolation and grief pushed us to reach in and to reach out – claiming poetry and memory for survival and healing. It should be no surprise then, that part three of our Proceedings, “Creative Hope, Creating Healing,” is more robust than creative offerings in recent years. Love, poetry, and community brought us through the losses of the year. In part, because of this, I chose to include one of the poems that brought me through 2021 in our collection. Following the death of my mother, I taped a copy of “Chiconahui calli xihuitl: Año nueve casa” to my office door. Each day that I came to the office I was reminded that I am in the house of time. And so in this volume I use the poem as the epigraph to introduce section three. In it, Rafael Jesús González, calls us, all of humanity, to remember that we are sheltered in “the house of time,” sheltered in flower and song, he prays, “May it be home to our joy, comfort of our grief.”

As a whole, the volume speaks to our lives as people of community: the work so many Chicana/o/xs are engaged in to create a better world for this generation and the next, and the power of words to recall, remember, and inspire critical labor in

times of crisis. This work includes bringing traditional healing home to communities in the Oakland Bay Area, the creation of spaces of movement for sustaining our communities, the teaching, learning and collaboration of the teachers and students of the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program, and the promotoras of project protect. This includes work in our universities, amid the losses of the pandemic. In our labor at schools, colleges, and universities, we too strove to be agents of healing and hope.

In my own classes several first-generation students had to help their parents and guardians at work, and so zoomed in from storage rooms and kitchens to keep up with school. They struggled with isolation and with loss, and I found myself calling on colleagues teaching in the K-12 system, in fact, a colega from our K-12 caucus, for pedagogy tips and input. I was, once again, grateful that working from silos was not part of my training and is not part of our method as NACCS educators, practitioners, and activists.

I too moved, into the back room of my mother's home as she recovered from a fall. Because of our economic privilege my partner was able to set up a workstation in that back room; even as I saw my student's homes, families, and pets, they saw my mother, traveling with her walker down the hallway. While we were apart physically, we grew to know a bit more about each other than we had known in the context of classroom education.

Like many of you, while I struggled to remain connected to my family and to my students, I was also aware of the role that Covid played in exacerbating the already gross inequalities that structure our world in the twenty-first century. While university students, such as those at WSU struggled to balance childcare, studies, and paid labor, the gap between grade school children of high income and low-income school districts became a widening chasm.¹ The role of zip code and economic status has, historically determined the quality of education a young person will receive in America's public schools.² In this context of inequality,

¹ "The Impact of COVID-19 on the Disadvantage Gap in Primary Schools," *Education Journal*, no. 477 (February 2022): 29; Olivia Crow, "Education Inequality during Covid-19: How Remote Learning Is Widening the Achievement Gap and Spurring the Need for Judicial Intervention," *Boston College Law Review* 63 no. 2 (2022): 713-52.

² Crow, 717-718; Zeus Leonardo and W. Norton Grubb, *Education and Racism : A Primer on Issues and Dilemmas* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 104-106.

many city and district decisions throughout the pandemic failed to provide internet access for low-income and homeless youth, failed to address the needs of parents and guardians who could not work from home, and failed to develop an effective means of delivery for ESL and non-English learners.³ The programming and bridges created by Universidad Popular, and the National Latino Research Center of California State University San Marcos, discussed in part two of this volume, became even more critical to the flourishing of our youth and our communities.

The devastation of the pandemic on the health of BIPOC communities and on the education of young people in our schools is not a coincidence. Just as public education is often referred to as “the great equalizer,” so too state and national politicians came to refer to Covid 19.⁴ The harsh erasure of social inequalities accomplished by that short but powerful phrase allowed the structural racism and classism of our country and our world to breed and flourish. And so, before turning, to introduce the scholarship of 2021, I will digress, for just a couple pages, to place the virus, and our miracle of an online conference, in a larger historical context – one where the history of structural racism, in the U.S., gave rise to the unequal and devastating losses of 2021.

Love in a time of *Pathological Racism*⁵

In U.S. history destructive patterns repeat themselves; the dominant majority (or a dominant minority) blames the latest virus and/or economic crisis on people and nations outside the nation-state, while resources are distributed unequally among those within. Good people see and strive to address the pattern, yet it persists: a

³ Crow, 721-723.

⁴ Crow, 717; See also Stephen A. Mein, “COVID-19 and Health Disparities: The Reality of ‘the Great Equalizer,’” *JGIM: Journal of General Internal Medicine* 35 no. 8 (2020): 2439–40. doi:10.1007/s11606-020-05880-5.

⁵ Pathological racism is a term coined and mobilized by Ari Larissa Heinrich. See “The Future Repeats Itself: Covid-19 and its Historical Comorbidities,” In *Crisis*, edited by Jane Golley, Linda Jaivin, and Sharon Strange, (Canberra, Australia: ANU Press, 2021), 170. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1m9x316.20>.

crisis hits, social inequalities are exacerbated, the most vulnerable are scapegoated, the pandemic subsides. In this, our time of pathological racism, Covid exacerbated unequal access to healthcare, education, and other critical resources, while certain politicians and their followers scapegoated Chinese people, and Asians in general. Social inequality is not unique to times of pandemics, but instead is exacerbated by them, calling to mind the language of Ari Larissa Heinrich, whose use of the phrase “pathological racism” marks the intersection of racism and disease in the Western world, and how pathological racism made possible the anti-Asian violence of the nineteenth-century just as it made possible the racist violence of Covid 19.⁶

In the U.S. the scapegoating of Chinese immigrants and, in relation, Asian Americans has deep roots. From their arrival as workers in the fields and on the railroads of the nineteenth century, Euro-Americans blamed them for everything from wage suppression to the spread of cholera. This discrimination had deep roots in the global economy of the Opium Wars and in the global economy of Western Christianity. Long before the Chinese immigrated to the U.S., Euro-American merchants, missionaries, and diplomats traveled to China. Missionaries returned frustrated that the Chinese refused to convert to Christianity and told stories painting the Chinese as “heathen” and backward. Merchants, angry at China’s long closed ports, told similar tales.⁷ As noted by Ari Heinrich,

Imperialist powers perceived themselves to have a civilizing mission. It helped to justify occupation and exploitation if the occupied and exploited were painted as inferior but capable of improvement through the paternalistic intervention of the occupier and exploiter.⁸

By the time Chinese immigrants arrived in the U.S, Euro-American culture was replete with Anti-Asian stereotypes. When the newly arrived Chinese succeeded

⁶ Heinrich, 170-174.

⁷ Sucheng Chan, *Asian Californians* (San Francisco: MTL:Boyd and Fraser, 1991), 40; Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 158-160.

⁸ Heinrich, 174.

in mining and formed viable labor communities, white labor, reacted with violence.⁹ In Folsom, California, in 1858 white miners formed an anti-Chinese organization and drove approximately 30 Chinese miners from their claims. That same year a mob of about 150 white men drove another 200 Chinese miners from their claims near Alder creek in Sacramento County.¹⁰ Throughout the U.S. national West, violence and discrimination took shape through the legal system, through racist discourse produced by politicians and the news media, and through overt, physical violence. Not surprisingly, medical discourse shared in and contributed to this violence. Western medical practitioners blamed twentieth-century outbreaks of cholera on China, and, in relation, Chinese immigrants.¹¹

When Donald Trump referred to Covid 19 as the “China virus,” his language pulled on and fueled a strain of pathological racism that, in the West, goes back for over a century. The pathological racism that he brought to the White House, spurred an increase in hate crimes even before the onset of Covid. Organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center, UnidosUS, and the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association noted an immediate increase in hate-crimes following the 2016 election.¹² The violence was widespread, targeting Chicaxxs and Latinxs, Asian Americans, Jews and Muslims, Indigenous people, and African Americans.¹³ With the onset of the pandemic, Trump, and other anti-

⁹ Chan, 1-12; Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 31-33.

¹⁰ B.S. Brooks, *Appendix to the Opening Statement and Brief of B.S. Brooks on the Chinese Question* (San Francisco: Women’s Co-operative Printing Union, 1877), 9.

¹¹ Joan B. Trauner, “The Chinese as Medical Scapegoats in San Francisco, 1870-1905.” *California History* 57, no. 1 (1978): 70–87. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25157817>.

¹² Marc Davis, “Rise in Hate Crimes, Divisive Rhetoric Prompts Bar Groups to Act.” *ABA Journal* 103 no. 4 (2017): 1; Alejandro Beutel, “How Trump’s Nativist Tweets Overlap with Anti-Muslim and Anti-Latino Hate Crimes,” *Southern Poverty Law Center, Hatewatch*. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/05/18/how-trump%E2%80%99s-nativist-tweets-overlap-anti-muslim-and-anti-latino-hate-crimes>. Accessed March 18, 2022.

¹³ Karina Wong, “History Lesson and Class Project: Educator Karina Wong Talks about Her Asian and Latino Heritage and her Ideas for Inter-Racial Solidarity in All Form,” *UnidosUS*. <https://www.unidosus.org/progress-report/educator-karina-wong-talks-about->

Asian racists, were able to draw from a deep well of toxic discourse, fueling yet a new wave of violence throughout the nation.¹⁴ As his attention split between building walls and the virus, Trump became bold in his vitriol toward Asia. In part, as a result, between March and December of 2020 Stop Asian American Pacific Islanders Hate reported 3,800 hate anti-Asian hate crimes in the U.S.; many of the targets were elders. In March a 21-year-old white male killed eight people, targeting three Asian-owned businesses in Atlanta, Georgia. The President of the U.S., even while informed of the role that his racist language played in fueling such violence, continued engage such language in his viral discourse.¹⁵

Our many and diverse communities responded to the increased violence with organizing and coalition; Stop AAPI Hate sent out a statement “Our approach recognizes that in order to effectively address anti-Asian racism we must work to end all forms of structural racism leveled at Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color.”¹⁶ UnidosUS (formerly the National Council of La Raza) published articles on Asian-Latinos, including a lesson plan for teachers. The Antidefamation league began tracking both Anti-Asian and antisemitic conspiracy theories, as well as hate crimes against Asian communities.¹⁷ In a 2020 article Jonathan Greenblatt of the ADL, drew structural connections between the rise in Anti-Asian hate crimes, the lynching of George Floyd by police officers, and the 2019 slaughter of 23 people in El Paso, Texas, killed by a white supremacist who

[her-asian-and-latino-heritage-and-her-ideas-for-inter-racial-solidarity-in-all-forms/](#). Accessed March 19, 2022.

¹⁴ Rebeca Toledo, “Anti-Asian Hate Did Not Begin with Trump,” *Beijing Review* 64, no. 14 (2021): 27; Greenblatt, 212.

¹⁵ Toledo, 27; Jonathan A. Greenblatt, “Fighting Hate in the Era of Coronavirus,” *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, no. 17 (2020): 213. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48590574>.

¹⁶ Toledo, 27.

¹⁷ Greenblatt, 212.

sought to “kill as many Mexicans as possible.”¹⁸ He noted that while the violence against our communities is manifested differently, the root causes were/are found in violent, structural racism.

As noted by Katrina Wong, Latinx and Asian coalition, while seldom recorded, is a powerful tool for survival and for change. In 1974, for example, the Puerto Rican educational nonprofit ASPIRA

...joined forces with a group of Chinese parents in California in a legal battle for native language assessments. The case, known as *Lau v. Nichols*, landed in the Supreme Court where it was unanimously decided that not attempting to provide supplemental language instruction to English learners violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964.¹⁹

The time of Covid is a time of pathological racism. Like the activists of Stop AAPI Hate, UnidosUS, and the Antidefamation league, we know roots of this violence run deep. And we know lasting solutions lie in community strength and in coalition.

As we move into what the CDC is calling the post-pandemic phase, we do so with the knowledge that neither education, nor viruses are “great equalizers.” Instead, the virus exacerbated unequal access to education, unequal distribution of wealth, and unequal distribution of the resources necessary to survive the pandemic. But we also know that the way forward is through community and coalition.

Love in the time of La Corona:

When, in 2021, we came together under the theme of Love in the time of la Corona, it was not surprising that so much of our work focused on action. In this volume we include the plenary addresses of Sandra Pacheco and Ben Olguín. Pacheco’s work reminds us of the healing traditions of our own communities.

¹⁸ Greenblatt, 213-215. Karna Wong reminds us, that in addition to the violent crimes listed above, Clifton Blackwell threw acid on Mahud Villalaz as he was entering a Mexican restaurant in Wisconsin.

¹⁹ Wong.

While she speaks to the work that she and other curanderas do in the Bay Area, and of traditions from her own family, she also highlights the work of so many Chicanas and Indigenous women who are bringing traditional healing and practices to our classrooms and communities; she asks us, “Can you envision our graduates carrying ancestral wisdom, advising doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers on how to better serve our *gente*?” Ben Olguín’s work follows her call with a call for self-critique, highlighting not only examples of times and spaces where departments of Chicana/o/x studies have become complicit with empire, but also reminding us that we do know how to be both critical and expansive. Our field, as our archive, is discrepant, and thus holds the possibility of achieving “a paradigm shift that more accurately accounts for the myriad ways we navigate power.”

We are also fortunate to be able to include several papers by scholars and activists who presented at our virtual gathering—*gente* whose work, like the 2021 plenaries, brings us specific examples of challenging structural inequalities. This second section opens with a paper by Ardón, Favela, Hernández, Millan, Muro, Nuñez-Alvarez, Ramírez, Romero, Santiago, Serrano and Torres, where they draw attention to the critical work of la Universidad Popular and the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Programs in addressing structural inequality in education, and in the multiple ways their community negotiated the violence and inequitable challenges of the Covid pandemic. Including the voices of students in this powerful work, they offer concrete examples of how to use community cultural wealth to “build and nurture the bridge from higher education institutions to our communities... reclaim our space, be civically engaged, and dismantle the social, cultural, and economic barriers that have been place in our communities.”

In this second section it is the work of Emmad and Peña who bring our attention to the health inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic. They map connections between unequal access to health care and the marginalization of BIPOC communities, reminding us,

The dominant neoliberal healthcare regime has commoditized health care.... The enduring health care inequities are a result of structural racism and are associated with settler colonial founding institutions that have long blocked BIPOC access to quality health

care, safe workplace environments, and access to safe housing, clean water, and air.

While calling attention to the role of environmental racism in exacerbating the violence of the pandemic, they also speak to the concrete actions of assisting and listening to promotoras who assist agri-food system workers in fighting for and negotiating for human rights such as healthcare, organizing rights and humane working conditions; of fighting for legislation that protects essential workers, and then fighting to maintain its application on the ground. While the state engages in destructive engagements with biopower, they argue, workers engage biopower, to a different end, one that “converts [abuses of biopower] into acts of life-affirming solidarity and collective action.”

Finally, and, creatively, Alejandro Wolbert Pérez brings us into the world of Conjunto, where dancers claim and make space for “pleasure and community.” Like Sandra Pacheco, whose plenary and practices build on the knowledge of her grandmother, so Wolbert Pérez draws on his grandmother’s knowledges, to address “Xicanx identity, cultural memory, and decolonial movidas, or struggles, across time and space.” Expanding our archive, he draws on community space, voice, and movement to demonstrate how

Conjunto’s participants and performers defy modernity’s insistence upon an erasure of the past that breaks with history, and the individualist edicts of late capitalism and the neoliberal state. Conjunto musicians and conjunto dancers are living archives and repositories of knowledges; they embody our peoples’ histories and experiences.

It is Wolbert Pérez’s expansion of the archive that segues our Proceedings into Part Three, “Creative Hope, Creating Healing,” where the work of Arellano, Pendleton Jiménez, and Urquijo-Ruiz remind us of the power of poetry and prose, Gifts that, for many of us, helped to bring us through 2021 to the hope of another year. Like Wolbert-Pérez, as well as Pacheco, Karleen Pendleton Jiménez reminds us of the power of memory and abuelitas. Opening her piece with an excerpt from her work, *The Street Belongs to Us*, we are pulled into a discussion between a grandmother (based on her own grandmother), and a young, 12-year old Chicana tomboy. The discussion? History and memory. Pendleton-Jiménez unpacks the context of the novel, where the memories of her grandmother are

connected to the Indigenous memories of the first nations of Canada, and the struggles for Chicax and Indigenous curricula and knowledges. It is through her own journey to Chicax theory and praxis, that she was able to create fictive characters such as Nana, to voice resistance and provide critical histories for the next generation. Similarly, Rita E. Urquijo-Ruiz’s “Apá,” draws on memory. Yet, perhaps that is where the similarity ends. For while, *In the Street Belongs to Us*, the relationship between Nana and her young grandchild seems almost idyllic, in “Apá,” the relationship between the young tomboy and her Apá is not. “Apá” carries us into the conflicted archive of childhood—a child’s-eye view of love, violence, and loss.

The volume closes as it opens—with poetry. Cathy Arellano’s poems, intersecting with the critical work of B.V. Olguín, remind us of the violence of empire at home, but also of joy – the warmth of young love on a street corner where missionary ladies preach and “I do” is spoken with poetic passion. Urquijo-Ruiz’s “MÁS-cara” reminds us of Anzaldúa’s words which, todavía remind us that we must “carve and chisel [our] own face[s].”²⁰ Together the poems bring us forward. NACCS 2021 provided us with opportunities to share knowledge and beauty, to struggle together, to imagine and create new futures. Poetry, flor y canto, reminds us that our struggles are not new struggles and that we know how to do this.

Before closing, I extend a special thanks to Rafael Jesús González, for allowing us to use three of his poems in this volume: “La Luna Bendice” | “The Moon Blesses”; “Rezo a Tonantzin” and; “Chiconahui calli xihuitl: Año nueve casa” | “Chiconahui Calli Xihuitl: Year Nine House.” I first came to know González’s work through his translations of Nahuatl poetry – he was among the first scholars to translate Mexican poetry for our community, publishing his work in *El Grito*.²¹ When, preparing to contact him I searched his name online, I discovered he was the first poet laureate of Berkeley, had won more awards for his work than I could list, and in 2010 was honored as one of the Museum of California’s “24 remarkable Californians.” Being the bold person that I am, I contacted him and asked permission to use his translation anyway, and thus began my love

²⁰ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), 22.

²¹ Rafael Jesús González, “Songs from the Nahuatl,” *El Grito* 5, no.1 (Fall 1971): 13-16.

relationship with his poetry. As noted above, his work helped bring me through 2021 in beauty and power (you can subscribe to receive his poetry in your inbox <http://rjgonzalez.blogspot.com/>).

I am also eternally grateful to the 2021 editorial team who labored through a difficult year, carving out time to move this volume forward. They not only read and critiqued individual papers, but also proofed and edited the entire manuscript before it was uploaded. Our NACCS 2021 Proceedings would not have seen completion without the skill and labor of Isabel Millán, Jennifer Mata, and María González.

The struggle continues as we struggle to heal from our many losses. As global empires continue to wage wars against each other and against sovereign nations, the work of Drs. Pacheco, Olgúin, Emmad, Peña, Wolbert Pérez, and the people of Homie UP, remind us to do work that matters. The poetry and prose of Urquijo-Ruiz, Arellano, Pendleton Jiménez, and González, remind us to dig deep. We know what to do. As we move forward in this year of war, where so many of our communities continue to lose gente to the pandemic, we remember that we stand together, and we walk together, in the house of time. We continue to do the work and we look forward to our next gathering.

Solidariamente,

L. Heidenreich, March 2022
Washington State University
On the Land of the Nimiipuu

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Welcome Letter

NACCS Chair-Elect, Roberto D. Hernández

Estimad@s Colegas,

As the 2019-2020 NACCS Chair-Elect, I was initially slated to be the 2020 Program Chair and then came el Corona virus (in Spanish accent). As such, my task would have originally been to welcome you to the 47th Annual National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) conference in Seattle, Washington. Instead, here we are introducing to you the first ever iteration of a virtual NACCS Conference coming to your exhausting Zoom screen wherever it is that you have found refuge during this unprecedented pandemic.

Given the changing circumstances and the uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19, it goes without saying that our world has been turned on its head. However, this idea of a world turned upside down bears some reflection, for arguably the modern/colonial world has been existing as a world on its head for the last five centuries. In fact, the Mamos, Indigenous spiritual guides from the mountains of Colombia and Mayan medicine people alike, spoke of the coronavirus as a living entity, a living force or spirit that is at once also a messenger that arrived to warn us of the destructive direction in which “modern” society was steering our planet and hence the need to shift course. The first few months of worldwide shutdown indeed proved to be a regenerative moment, albeit brief, for our Madrecita Tierra, and perhaps the closest we have come to the complete decimation of an exploitative and extractive capitalist world economy that thrives on human misery and the destruction of life in all its forms. From this perspective, the messenger came to restore equilibrium, though that too with costly consequences for many in our own communities who bear the brunt of exacerbated inequalities.

In a somewhat related note, the theme of what would have been the Seattle conference asked us to draw attention to not just the various 50th anniversaries of diverse Chicano movement happenings that were taking place, but to shift our own cartographies and calendars to consider the occasion of a 52nd turn around the Sun often marked by numerous Indigenous nations of Turtle Island as the time for New Fire Ceremonies.

The New Fire Ceremony is not just about reflecting and marking the passing of another Gregorian calendar year. It is about the complementary destructive and creative forces that bring new worlds into being, new forms of social relations, new modes of sentir, pensar and hacer; a renewal and rebirth that comes with a collective reassessment of where we have been and where we are headed as a diverse yet cohesive assemblage of overlapping communities. The task is not easy or without conflict and heartbreak. On the contrary, it is both momentous and necessary.

This time of pandemic has interestingly seen both devastation to our people who are often on the “frontlines” as “essential” qua expendable workers, but it has also seen some growth in terms of the expansion of Chicana and Chicano Studies and Ethnic Studies as required courses in different high school and university curriculums across various states. Of course, this has also meant new challenges in terms of battles over control of resources and the very definition of what is and is not Ethnic Studies, Chicana and Chicano Studies, etc. Ultimately, what is at stake is what is deemed appropriate and even utterable content and discourse, or the boundaries of acceptable terms of debate, in our attempts to bring to life the stories, experiences, knowledges and conocimientos of our communities. Self-determination, the ability to determine our own collective futures, once seen as the cornerstone of Chicana/o movement efforts, is once again – or perhaps simply continues to be – under attack. But as the movimiento, the picket lines, the takeovers, sit-ins, walkouts, have shown us, when under attack we rise up and fight back.

As such, while we were not able to gather in Seattle, we nevertheless decided that this first ever virtual NACCS conference was not a task for one Program Chair to take on, but rather a moment for us to redouble our efforts and our collective spirit that lit that first fire in the 1968 walkouts and at the first gathering of the National Caucus of Chicano Social Scientists (NCCSS) in Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1973. For this reason, the 2020 Conference Theme, Love in the Time of La Corona, was the result of collective conversations about a return to the most essential: how do we carry on.... how do we live, love, write, create community in the absence or minimal presence of embodied connection? In the face of continued stolen lives at the hands of police violence. In the reality of continued murdered and missing Indigenous women, of family separation and caged children at the border, the real and artificial Black and Brown divides that result in misplaced ‘what about us’ missives, and rampant homophobia and transphobia in our own families and communities. The Trumpism that preceded Trump, now run wild.

While La Corona is still with us, let us come together virtually in hopes that

the lessons learned over this past year of turning inward towards our own respective home fires not be lessons that pass us in vain. I thus thank you and look forward to the collective reflections that our program aims to bring together in these most trying times.

En acompañamiento,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roberto H. Hernández", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Roberto D. Hernández

Welcome

NACCS Chair, Karleen Pendleton Jiménez

Dear Colegas,

I write to welcome you to the 47th conference of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies. I write to you from Toronto, a city of immigrants from all over the world, inhabiting the traditional land of the First Nations.

This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes” (The Council of Ontario Universities).

Like many of you, we have been in a more or less continuous lockdown for over a year. Toronto has been renamed Covidville by Canadians living outside our boundaries.

Love in the time of La Corona. Love of the land that I walk each evening with more energy and knowledge than I've ever possessed. At this moment spring is taking hold of the streets of Little Italy (my community), where tiny, highly, cultivated gardens push up against the sidewalks with bright colors that we haven't seen in the past 6 months of winter. Love of the velvet purple pansies I planted to mark the occasion. Love of my cats. Love of my children. Love of my girlfriend. Love of my far away family on the other side of a closed border. Love of my friends and colleagues on zoom. Love of my people. I watch the numbers of LA County every night with fear and sadness; there are more cases and deaths in my birth county than in all of Canada, and Chicana/o/xs are taking the greatest hit. What can we in Chicana/o/x Studies offer to recognize, to mourn, to resist, to fight for these lives, to fight for our lives?

Most days I work on loving my students. I am a professor of education. My position is informed by my foundation in Chicana/o/x Studies. I spend a great deal of time considering pedagogical theory and practice. Throughout my career, I have thought most about those who have felt excluded by traditional schooling, often due to systemic discrimination such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, and many more for whom the culture of institutional hierarchy and competition is neither natural nor acceptable. La Corona has exacerbated these exclusions.

Care is the core principle of Teaching. Love is what drives care. Love during the Time of La Corona in the Virtual Classroom. Does my love reach the many students on the other side of the dark, muted screen? Does it come through the flowers and photos that rest behind me on my desk as I speak to them? What troubles me is that even when their cameras are on, I cannot see the shine in their eyes. And without that, I find it nearly impossible to read their emotions. When one of the Indigenous students in my class this year brought up a troubling issue about racist representation, I could not tell if she was ok after speaking up in the zoom classroom of predominantly white students. What is most difficult is that my students are teachers who are not yet vaccinated (for the most part), nor yet prioritized for vaccinations (for the most part), but stand in front of overcrowded classrooms gambling with their health for work. I want to know why there has not been enough love from the public for teachers' bodies throughout the year to make any realistic attempts to protect them. This lack of love has been heartbreaking.

In these moments, I turn to some of my Chicana feminist pedagogy scholars to help me breathe: to Anita Tijerina-Revilla and her "Muxerista Consciousness," to help me recognize that teachers' bodies are primarily women's bodies and that I need to reinvigorate my fight against the government which has deemed them expendable during La Corona; to Dolores Delgado Bernal to remind me of my teachings from home, of my mother's unwillingness to blindly believe the facts that the powers that be would tell her; to Alexandra Arraíz- Matute and her pedagogies of *cariño* when I run between my zoom screen and my daughter's virtual school to keep her from becoming too alone and despairing; to C. Alejandra Elenes and her borderland pedagogies where embracing contradictions and flexibilities has been more important than ever to survive the chaos of the year; to Cindy Cruz who just this week spoke of the importance of transgression if we are to create loving spaces for our queer Chicana/o/x students.

There are possibilities for transgressions in online teaching too, glimpses of

love in the clever and humorous notes filling the chat (finally note-passers have become legitimate). There is love in the feedback I write on their papers before scanning them back into the virtual abyss. There is love in the red heart reactions that spread across the screen when a student has courageously shared a piece of their lives for the others.

I wish to thank the many individuals and committees who have worked on NACCS over the past two years: especially Focos, Caucuses, Awards Committees, The Proceedings Committee, Members who have helped in the writing of NACCS Statements, Noticias Editors, Noticias Contributors, Donors, Volunteers, Board Members, and our Associate and Executive Directors.

Finally, I want to thank members for your trust in me to hold this position. My work on this conference will be my last act as Chair of NACCS; after this I will serve a year as Past-Chair, before stepping down from the board. While this La Corona year has been challenging, it has also been a great privilege to serve in this role. I have had the opportunity to carefully study the panels, abstracts, books, and articles from members of NACCS, and I have come to understand more thoroughly the depth and impact of our research and teaching. It has been one of the most meaningful educational experiences of my life. In a way, I think these extraordinary circumstances have brought the NACCS community closer together. I have had the opportunity to meet so many more members of NACCS through email, zoom and phone calls; I have had the opportunity to listen, to talk, and to learn from other members. As we speak from each of our isolated homes in the time of La Corona, I hear love in the sound of your voices.



Karleen Pendleton Jiménez

PART ONE: Discrepant Archives of Self-Knowledge and Healing

The Moon Blesses

The full moon blesses
with light what is in darkness,
makes the harsh more kind.

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La luna bendice

La luna llena bendice
con luz lo que está en oscuridad,
hace lo duro más amable.

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Ancestral Healing Studies: Preparing the Next Generation of Practitioners

Sandra M. Pacheco

With permission from my ancestors, my spirit guides, my teachers in Oaxaca, and the Karkin Ohlone ancestors on whose land I am a guest, I offer these thoughts, reflections, and practices. I welcome and honor your ancestors.

Thank you, Dr. Isabel Millán and Dr. Yvette Saavedra, for this opportunity to share virtually with our NACCS community, and to do so with esteemed scholars Dr. Doris Careaga-Coleman and Dr. Francisco J. Galarte. What I share with you today reflects and is informed by my multiple responsibilities and intersectional social identities. These include responsibilities as academic, researcher, consultant, activist, and practitioner of curanderismo. These multiple responsibilities are situated within my social identities of Chicana, Indígena, CIS gender, first generation, middle-class, and transterritorial, living part of the year in the San Francisco Bay Area and part of the year in Oaxaca, Mexico.¹

When I read the title of the plenary, “Reshaping our Bodies of Knowledge: Transcending the Limits of Chicana/x Studies,” my spirit was activated, my heart jumped, and my mind began to imagine what it might look like to incorporate my work in ancestral healing traditions more fully into our curricula as part of a larger cohesive area of study, perhaps as a concentration or certificate. I hope to show through my *platica* that we are ready for this next step and more importantly, that our ancestral medicine is desperately needed. For the

¹ I use transterritorial to subvert socially constructed borders but also as part of an expanded lived spiritual ancestral healing practice in the US and Mexico, referred to by Angela D. Anderson as Transterritorial Ancestral Spirituality. For a detailed explanation and discussion see *Transterritorial Ancestral Spirituality: A Caracol Study of Mexican and Mexican American Mesoamerican Knowledges*.

purposes of what I am sharing with you today, I will be using curanderismo, ancestral medicine, and ancestral healing somewhat interchangeably. These practices all refer to indigenous-informed practices that are deeply and respectfully connected to Mother Earth, and understand how mind, body, spirit, and heart are inextricably interconnected.² Approaches vary by regions in Mexico but share underlying practices, rituals, and philosophies. What I share with you pertaining to curanderismo will be specifically from my paternal grandmother's traditions and from the lineage of my Maestra elders who are mostly Zapotec. It is important to share that I am not Zapotec and my work in curanderismo is with permission from my Zapotec Maestra elders. I will be privileging my community work and sharing primarily as a practitioner of curanderismo in community, which serves to inform content for courses I have taught and workshops I have offered at various universities and community non-profits in the San Francisco Bay area, and national and international academic and professional conferences.

For the past 7 years I have had the opportunity and privilege to live in Oaxaca for three to six months out of the year to study and research curanderismo.³ I first went to Oaxaca after experiencing a traumatic soul loss. After months of not being able to function during the day and walking about as if I were in a dream and waking up in the middle of the night to a guttural scream emerging from my body, I turned to my partner and said to him, "I need to go home. I need to go to Mexico. I need to go heal." I knew that no doctor or psychologist could help me with what I was going through. I needed ancestral medicine. I needed medicine that could tend to my soul and to my spirit. This began my return to the ways of my grandmother, Margarita Flores.

My grandmother, Doña Margarita Flores (Doña Mague), born in 1915, knew well the importance and power of plants, of prayer, and of ritual. She had tremendous faith in ancestral medicine and tended to her home altar every day. Her shelves were stacked with jars filled with herbs releasing their medicine into

² This definition places heavy emphasis on respect for Madre Tierra as shared by Doña Enriqueta Contreras Contreras.

³ Studying and researching curanderismo is through a decolonial framework, one that centers spirit and positions me alongside healers, learning as I would have from my grandmother. I rarely ask questions to avoid any form of invasive research that seeks to actively extract info. The relationship with my teachers and elders is reciprocal, finding ways to be of service to them.

alcohol. She would casually grab an egg from the fridge to give you a *limpia* the way a mother would instinctively grab a tissue to wipe their child's nose. And every morning she prepared *baboso nopal liquados* for herself and others needing support with their diabetes. On her daily walks she would come back with numerous plant cuttings only to be reprimanded by family members for stealing and not asking permission from the neighbors. She would smirk and say to them, "*dijieron que se querían venir conmigo.*" She was not kidding. The plants spoke to her and were drawn to her. My family was not too thrilled with my grandmother's *creencias*. When she pulled out an egg or gathered plants to begin a *limpia* on someone, nearby eyes would be rolling or someone would say, "*ay Mague con sus locuras.*" I remember them shaming her, feeling it in my body as I witnessed it, but my grandmother did not care what they thought. She would wave her hand in the air, and with a classic teeth-sucking MEH, dismiss them. She clearly knew who she was, and she clearly had faith in her practices. This is the ancestral tradition that I come from—that was central to my childhood experiences. And, although plant medicine and home altars had been a constant in my life, it would take a traumatic experience to return more deeply to a personal practice in *curanderismo*.

Not only did I return to the practice personally, but also in community and academically. Academically I began incorporating *curanderismo* into the Critical Decolonial Psychology minor that I directed. I realized how important it was to fully integrate spirituality into my course offerings. I subscribe to Anzaldúa's perspectives on spiritual knowing: "Those who carry *conocimiento* refuse to accept spirituality as a devalued form of knowledge and instead elevate it to the same level occupied by science and rationality."⁴

I began to offer workshops and teach undergraduate and graduate university courses on *curanderismo* that covered the main elements that would be included in a detailed session with a *curandera/o/x* or practitioner of *curanderismo*, as taught by my elders in Oaxaca and my grandmother, with added elements of critical decolonial psychology. The elements from *curanderismo* included the *platica*, tending a spiritual practice, home altars, *comida curativa*, *limpias*, *hierbas medicinales*, and other healing rituales. From critical decolonial

⁴ Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, edited by AnaLouise Keating (Duke University Press, 2015), 116.

psychology I shared the importance of not pathologizing people and understanding the impact of systemic oppression on one's spirit and subsequently on one's health and well-being.⁵ After my classes and workshops there was one consistent question I received, "where can I learn more?" I want them to learn more. We need them to learn more. Our communities need them to learn more.

We know all too well that there exist inequities in health and access to health care for our *gente*. The pandemic has magnified this reality. We have seen how systemic racism, found in practices and policies that do not consider language, multigenerational households, immigration status, economic status, and disproportionate representation of our *gente* serving as essential workers, has resulted in higher rates of Covid-19 infections.⁶ Sadly, I think most of us are not surprised by this. We have known about these health inequities and health disparities for some time, even prior to the pandemic.

Given the historical health and societal inequities and disparities that exist for our *gente*, I began to focus on access. I knew I could find ways to provide free or donation-based access to health and wellness services that were effective and familiar to our *gente*. To start, I could get medicinal *hierbas* to the community, medicinal *hierbas* that could support health issues and emotional wellness. But I knew more was needed, and that more persons were needed to provide support.

Thus, in 2014 I co-founded, with eight other women, Curanderas sin Fronteras, a grassroots healing collective dedicated to serving the health and well-being of our communities through traditional ancestral medicine. We were nine women who had experienced curanderismo growing up, felt a calling, and were returning to this ancestral practice: Gavy Castillo, Karrin Chiefetz, Alma Jurado, Berenice Dimas, Napaquetzalli Martinez, Angelica Rodriguez, Marcela Sabin, Atava Garcia Swiecicki (our local mentor and herbalist teacher) and myself. Diana Gomez would later join us in 2018. We continued to study together and

⁵ For more on decolonial psychology see Yvette Flores, *Chicana and Chicano Mental Health: Alma, Mente, y Corazón* (University of Arizona, 2013); Lillian Comas-Díaz and Edil Torres Rivera, eds. *Liberation Psychology: Theory, Method, Practice, and Social Justice* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2020).

⁶ For more on Latinx Covid-19 health disparities see Calo WA, Murray A, Francis E, Bermudez M, Kraschnewski J. *Reaching the Hispanic Community About COVID-19 Through Existing Chronic Disease Prevention Programs*.

share with one another lessons from our lineages in order to develop our practice in curanderismo. Our offerings, as a grassroots collective, included providing medicinal herbs, limpieas, and educational workshops for our local community at events, healing clinics, nonprofit organizations, and one-on-one.



Curanderas sin Fronteras, 2015. Photo Credit: J. Pacheco Franklin

The image above is a snapshot of our first public clinic at Fruitvale BART station in Oakland for a Cinco de Mayo Event in 2015. This image continues to haunt me. What you do not see in the photo is that the line was over 100 persons long. We were four healers working with four other healers serving as support to us. After five hours, we ran out of plants for *limpias* and we were prepared to close but an older man standing in line ran to find more, returning with baskets full of flowers, rosemary, lavender, and *pericón*. On that day we met *gente* desperate for the medicine they knew. They asked for *ortiga* for their high blood pressure. They asked for *poleo* for their stomach. They asked for *gordolobo* for their lungs. They wanted to know where to find us, where our clinics were located, would there be another event, and where could they get more medicinal hierbas. One man cried, sharing that it had been 15 years since he had a *limpia* and did not think he could find one in the United States. I was humbled by their faith and trust in us. The responsibility was tremendous. They spoke of such intense suffering, of bosses mistreating them, of sexual harassment from coworkers, of fear of *la migra*, of doctors not caring, of sisters dying and having four extra children to feed, of spousal abuse, and so much more.

I held their *penas*, channeled my spirit guides, trusted the *plantitas* and *la medicina* and created space so they could release, so they could *desahogar*. They understood what my grandmother would say, “*hay que soltar sin no te va hacer mal.*” I worked to move the energy stuck on their bodies, energy that landed on them from the oppressive realities of our society. I reminded them that we both needed to do the work together, that they had to be willing to release. I kept thinking of one teacher, Doña Maria from Teotitlán del Valle, who prepares *temazcales* for those returning from *el norte* to help them release *el racismo y el mal trato que les cayó*. I channeled her energy, asked the *plantitas* to offer their medicine and when they could not release, I said, “that’s okay, I will cry your *penas* for you,” as Doña Queta taught me to do for others. That night I cried again.

I still cry when I see this image, because it has been the same story with every clinic, every *limpia* session we have offered. There are simply not enough practitioners of ancestral medicine for the tremendous need. Of the nine women who started, there are now only three of us left. Seven left and one new person joined. For some, it was too much to hold, and for others their health or family lives no longer permitted the work to be done. Truly, we need more folks training in ancestral healing traditions. We need more students developing these skills for the well-being of themselves, their families, and their communities.

Seeing the Fruitvale community in Oakland crave *la medicina* further reminded me of how powerful and effective our healing traditions are. Colonizers knew this so they sought to destroy it or take it. Modern science, as well as institutions of higher education, continue to colonize our ancestral medicine. For example, there is a resurgent infatuation with medicinal (aka psychedelic) mushrooms similar to what we saw in the 60s with the work of Mazatec Curandera, Maria Sabina. In the 60s the hippie *extranjero* colonial impact had been so devastating that Maria Sabina shared that she had gone from hearing the “holy children” speak to her, connecting the realms of divine and earth to no longer hearing them speak.⁷ Today we see this same colonial “extranjero” in the

⁷ For detailed information on the life and experience of Maria Sabina, see Andrea Pantoja Barco, *Soy Sabia, Hija de los Niños Santos: Mística y Conocimiento en María Sabina* (Universidad de Tolima, 2019).

form of universities offering programs and certificates in Psychedelics and Shamanic Studies with predominantly white professors.⁸

I do not wish to continue to see white-dominated programs at supposedly progressive institutions, appropriating our ancestral medicine. I wish to see our communities reclaim our medicine. I wish to see Chicana/x/o Studies imagine what it would look like to create academic programs in ancestral medicine and hold them with the same regard as counseling programs, social work programs and healthcare programs, programs where educators and researchers are also practitioners or previously practitioners. I wish to see us “reshape our bodies of knowledge” such that our ancestral traditions of health and wellness, which are powerfully informed and validated by centuries of wisdom, are privileged, and centered in our ways of knowing and being.

We already have a trajectory that is hopeful. Throughout our history in Chicana/x/o Studies we have described and analyzed the practices of ancestral healing and curanderismo that has resulted in an important body of knowledge on ancestral healing traditions.⁹ With that said, I feel we are at a critical point that the pandemic has amplified. We have seen, over the past 18 months, that our *gente* have suffered at higher rates than their white counterparts. Collectively and individually, we have experienced higher rates of stress, anxiety, grief, and depression while expected to engage in a “normal” that does not exist. This critical point calls us to expand upon analysis to more actively engaging in a development of skills and professional practices that honors our Madre Tierra, our ancestral medicine, and does so with an understanding that spirit, heart, and body must not be separated from mind. I am excited to see that we are at the initial stages of shifting how we engage ancestral healing practices in the academy.

⁸ See Psychedelic Certificate program at California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, CA: <https://www.ciis.edu/research-centers/center-for-psychedelic-therapies-and-research/about-the-certificate-in-psychedelic-assisted-therapies-and-research>.

⁹ It is important to note that, for many Chicanas, Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* is a re-activation of ancestral healing traditions. For a detailed overview of ancestral medicine, see the work of Eliseo Torres, in particular *Curanderismo: The Art of Traditional Medicine Without Borders* (Kendall Hunt, 2017). For detailed narratives of Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous women engaging ancestral medicine see Elisa Facio and Irene Lara, eds., *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women’s Lives* (University of Arizona, 2014).

In recent years we have begun to directly teach how to engage our ancestral healing practices, with some of our colleagues going on two decades of incorporating elements of ancestral traditions into their course(s). I offer a few examples of work that I am more familiar with, respectfully recognizing that there are many of you who have also started to incorporate experiential practices into your courses. The examples I share are of colleagues whose work I have more direct experience with over the years.

Dr. Aída Hurtado (UC Santa Barbara) has been incorporating an altar assignment in her *Chicana Feminisms* courses for nearly 20 years. This assignment is structured as the development of an identity altar that provides students with the opportunity to examine the social construction of self within the context of a sacred space that provides for a dynamic interaction with an altar and its components. The active engagement with an altar and its elements is reflective of the practices we maintain in curanderismo.

Dr. Luz Calvo (CSU East Bay) has been teaching courses on decolonizing your diet¹⁰ and inviting healers to teach about medicinal herbs, limpias, and plant relatives. Their emphasis on food is connected to respect for Madre Tierra and a deep understanding of the impact on health and wellness when we connect to and consume ancestral foods. Their incorporation of medicinal herbs is not from a Western perspective, but rather from ancestral traditions that understand plants as relatives with distinct energies. Dr. Calvo's incorporation of limpias in their courses is foundational to our practices in curanderismo, and historically, it is one of our most powerful practices for healing.

Dr. Melissa Moreno (Woodland Community College) connects students with land, Madre Tierra, and invites healers to speak about ancestral medicine. Similar to Dr. Calvo, Dr. Moreno is centering respect for la Madre Tierra in her work. In her *Chicana/o Latina/o Health* course she invites practitioners of curanderismo to share about ancestral healing practices. She continues to develop her own practices related to ancestral medicine and shares this new knowledge with her students.

¹⁰ See Luz Calvo and Catriona Rueda Esquibel, *Decolonize Your Diet: Plant-Based Mexican American Recipes for Health and Healing* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2015).

Dr. Jennie Luna (CSU Channel Islands) is a professor, doula, and danzante with a 20+ year history with Aztec Danza as performer, researcher, and teacher. Her course, entitled, *Aztec Dance and Culture*, offers students the opportunity to embody culture, ritual, history, and symbolism. In addition to danza, she teaches courses addressing indigenous birth work, decolonizing your diet, and offers sunrise ceremonies to her students. Dr. Luna reflects the next generation of academics that brings me tremendous hope. Her work with students is deeply rooted in her ancestral practices from her community. In relation to reshaping bodies of knowledge, Dr. Luna enters the conversation as researcher, educator, and practitioner of ancestral medicine, with the role of practitioner reflecting an important shift.

Maestra Celia Herrera Rodríguez (UC Santa Barbara) co-founder of *Las Maestra's Center* has been offering workshops and *platicas* with curanderas from the US and Mexico. More importantly, she is one of our elders of ancestral medicine. She has offered sweat lodges to the community in the San Francisco East Bay for years as well as other ancestral healing rituals. Her recent appointment at UC Santa Barbara also emphasizes the important shift of practitioner of ancestral medicine situated within the academy.

Dr. Susy Zepeda (UC Davis) has been learning about and engaging in curanderismo since 2007. Informed by her learning experience with Curandera Estela Roman, she offers a course entitled, *Decolonizing Spirit*. The first quarter (winter 2016) that she offered the course, she also coordinated the *Indigenous Knowledge Series* that consisted of nine events. The events addressed numerous topics and practices found in Indigenous ancestral medicine. Over the winter quarter, local community members, practitioners, students, and colleagues came together to learn and continue a dialogue on Indigenous knowledges from a variety of lineages, perspectives, and practices. These important dialogues were amplified in 2019 when Dr. Zepeda co-curated an exhibit entitled *Xicanx Futurity*. Informed by Chicana/o arts movement of the 60s and Indigenous spiritual practices, artists engaged, depicted, and performed their journeys with centering Indigenous ancestral practices. Here again we see a shift toward scholar, educator, and practitioner of ancestral medicine.

Instructor and Doctoral Candidate Aa Valdivia (CSU East Bay) also reflects the next generation of academics who is providing direct guidance with

ancestral healing traditions. They teach courses on decolonizing your diet, medicinal herbs, and ritual practices such as creating a *tlamanalli*.¹¹ The focus on food, diet, and medicinal herbs is informed by ancestral healing traditions from both Mesoamerica and Taíno histories, connecting to Mother Earth and spirit. They continue to develop their practitioner skills through learning intensives with curanderas.

Dr. Eliseo Torres (University of New Mexico), Vice President of Student Affairs, has been coordinating a two-week summer intensive on curanderismo for numerous years. The summer intensive hosts ancestral medicine healers from various countries. In addition, he offers online courses on ancestral medicine. His intensives and courses focus on history, herbal remedies, and rituals.

The above eight examples of our colleagues' work are but a small sample of applied and experiential learning in ancestral healing traditions taking place in classrooms. In addition to the powerful work our colleagues are doing in the classroom, Drs. Lara Medina and Martha R. Gonzales edited and nurtured the development of their recent book, *Voices from the Ancestors: Xicanx and Latinx Spiritual Expressions and Healing Practices* that demonstrates the above shifts we are seeing. Although there are numerous books on ancestral healing traditions, most describe practices more from a social sciences or humanities analytical framework; a few, such as Eliseo Torres and Timothy Sawyer's book, *Healing with Herbs and Rituals*, offer some descriptions of rituals, but emphasize plant medicine descriptions and use. *Voices from the Ancestors* is an important shift in that many of the contributors are sharing how to do specific rituals, prepare remedies, and develop practices informed by ancestral traditions. This was not an easy task and many of us who contributed to the book had conversations about what to share given the prevalence of cultural appropriation. However, fear of cultural appropriation could not be the deciding factor. As Lara Medina and Martha Gonzales note in the introduction to their volume: "The contributors to this volume believe that it is time our wisdom be shared with our peers, younger generations, and allies, as we carry medicine in reclaiming and reconstructing the

¹¹ A *tlamanalli* is an offering made on the ground, like a mandala that honors the four directions and sacred elements. It is typically made with flower, seeds, and other natural elements.

ways of our Indigenous and African ancestors...”¹² Indeed, it is time that our wisdom be shared. Across the examples of our colleagues, noted above, the central concepts of curanderismo, ancestral medicine are addressed, and much more. I ask you: can you envision an Ancestral Medicine concentration or certificate in Chicana/o/x Studies? Can you envision Chicana/Latina/Indigenous health care workers serving our community with health and wellness practices that is meaningful to them? Can you envision psychologists, social workers, and counselors incorporating ancestral medicine into their practices? Can you envision our graduates carrying ancestral wisdom, advising doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers on how to better serve our *gente*? I can. It will be challenging. There will be those who seek to delegitimize our ancestral wisdom and we will also have to contend with the complex relationship we have with indigeneity. Like my grandmother we will face shaming as when they said to her “*ay Mague con sus locuras.*” I am ready to face what comes. I call on the spirit of my grandmother Margarita, Doña Mague, and like her I say “MEH” to the naysayers and embrace my *locura* and embrace this dream, this responsibility. I claim my journey in service to ancestral medicine, my ancestors, and the seven generations to come. I invite you to come along.

This is my offering.

This is my commitment.

This is my prayer.

Soy Sandra Margarita Pacheco,

Nieta de Doña Margarita Flores,

Aquí para servir.

¹² Lara Medina and Martha R. Gonzales, eds., *Voices from the Ancestors: Xicana and Latina Spiritual Expressions and Healing Practices* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 2019), 4.

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Crisis, Conflict, Conjuncture:
Confronting the Discrepant Raza Archive—Notes Towards a Chicana
Marxist Praxis

B. V. Olguín

Preface:

Concientización is a Lifelong Journey of *Autocrítica*

When I attended my first National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) Conference in Boulder, Colorado in 1988 as a 23-year-old undergraduate student, I could never have imagined I would be granted the honor of presenting on a plenary session 33 years later. At that time, I had just embarked on a long (and still ongoing) journey of transformation from a mystified Chicano who earlier had planned to become a US Army airborne infantry officer, into a cultural nationalist, then a more Marxist revolutionary nationalist. From my materialist ChicanIndio positionality, I eventually gravitated towards communism—a different Red Road, as it were—that involves an awareness that the process of *concientización*—or political awakening—must be an ongoing life-long enterprise that should never end. Thanks to NACCS, my growth and evolutions continue to this day, and are informed by NACCS feministas, Zapatistas, anarquistas, and the small but strong contingent of Raza comunistas who converge and dialogue at NACCS conferences in addition to many other venues. I am grateful to all of them for including me in this long march of discovery and transformation.

That is to say that I evolved, and continue to evolve, within NACCS as the organization itself evolved and continues to evolve. I witnessed and participated in many important moments in NACCS that mark this growth. I recall, for instance, when compañera Julia Curry productively paused the business meeting at one NACCS conference to recognize a Chicana undergraduate student whose campus contingent rejected her request to support the name change to the “National Association for *Chicana* and Chicano Studies.” The student came on

stage to report what had happened, and challenged the organization to confront itself. We did, and the organization name changed from the “National Association for Chicano Studies” to the “National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies.” More work to address heteropatriarchy remained (and still remains) to be done, but this was an important moment in this ongoing process of autocrítica, that is, the constant self-assessment and critique necessary for true concientización to occur and become kinetic political action. This episode modeled productive interventions into toxic masculinities that so many of us inherit.

Unfortunately, I also witnessed very many Raza faculty who never got involved in NACCS, or left the organization once their careers became more prominent. Ironically, they never supported, or fled, NACCS despite the fact some likely would not have had academic careers without this insurgent and ground-breaking organization. After all, it was NACCS and NACCS scholar-activists who helped institutionalize the field while simultaneously grounding its ethos beyond universities. This mostly heteropatriarchal male elitist Brown-flight, as I call it, coincided with the moment NACCS started dismantling its heteropatriarchal roots to embrace LGBTQ+ Raza. Refreshingly, I also saw veteranos like Rodolfo Acuña continue to be involved in NACCS in support of this opening and still evolving organization that has been kept going strong and creating new visions through leadership from Chicana lesbian activist scholars. There are many more important moments I have had the honor to witness, and play a small part in supporting as an ally. They all reveal how NACCS continues to evolve just as we must continue to evolve if we are to be true revolutionaries and not just simple advocates for “Raza empowerment” though agendas that claim to be decolonial and anti-capitalist but which too often merely seek Raza integration into the capitalist empire and related hierarchal practices that masquerade as “tradition,” “resistance,” “radical,” and “decolonial praxis.” N’mbre, shaddup, I cannot count the number of Raza veteranas and veteranos I have encountered who have reputations for being “radical” but who in practice turned out to be hierarchical, egocentric, exploitative, and outright reactionary. Some even insist on being called by the hierarchical terms “maestra” and “maestro” instead of the more egalitarian “compañera,” “compañero,” and “compañerx.” Too many of them continue to get away with hiding retrograde politics without being challenged.

Accordingly, I believe being a NACCS scholar and ally to people-in-struggle means offering important critiques, even when they are unpopular or unwanted. I thus want to follow the lead of the first major corrective of our field by Chicana feminist scholars from the 1980s and 1990s (though these interventions certainly began much earlier with a different gallery of foremothers). I specifically want to address an unintended consequence of our field's success: how our promotion of awareness about the long and diverse legacy of Raza resistance to oppressions may have inadvertently occluded the equally long and large legacy of Raza individualist opportunists, conservatives, right wingers, and even fascists. That is, I want to call our attention to what might be called a Raza discrepant archive, and the need for contrapuntal analysis, that is, reading against the grain of this archive. This archive makes almost no sense within some of our otherwise brilliant and productive Chicana Studies paradigms and theories of praxis predicated upon more overtly resistant subjectivities and related primary materials and phenomena. Indeed, it is frequently assumed that terms such as "Latinx," "Chicana," "Raza," and others automatically and unambiguously signal resistance and opposition to capitalism and imperialism. They do not. The insistence that Raza, and Raza Studies, are inherently counterhegemonic not only effaces real objective and subjective realities, but also makes us complicit in this mystification, ultimately rendering Raza Studies scholars as more conservative than we sometimes realize.

Chicanologa/os and the Degeneration of Raza Studies:

Ironically, despite some persistent beliefs about Raza as inherently oppositional to capitalism and imperialism, our field has been co-opted into a safe multiculturalism within which Chicana and Latinx millionaires are accepted as legitimate as Latinx generals and the growing mainstream Latinx political caste. More, the large and ever-growing cadre of tenured Raza professors—of which I am one—is sometimes seen as evidence of the success of the Chicana/o Movement, rather than being part of the middle class that has effectively become a stabilizing intermediary cadre of reformers that preempts real revolutionary consciousness raising, mobilizations, and interventions. I realize these statements are generalizations and quite polemical, especially since many (though certainly not all) NACCS scholars remain grounded in grassroots activism. But it is a fact that the Latinx middle and upper classes are growing while the Raza underclass remains vast, growing even larger, and still grounded in profound precarity. And

worse, some—and far too many—Raza Studies Departments, Centers, Programs, and Institutes have started to model an ideological degeneration that confirms our field needs to continue the ongoing work of meta-critique, that is, the critique of our very critical enterprise and praxis.

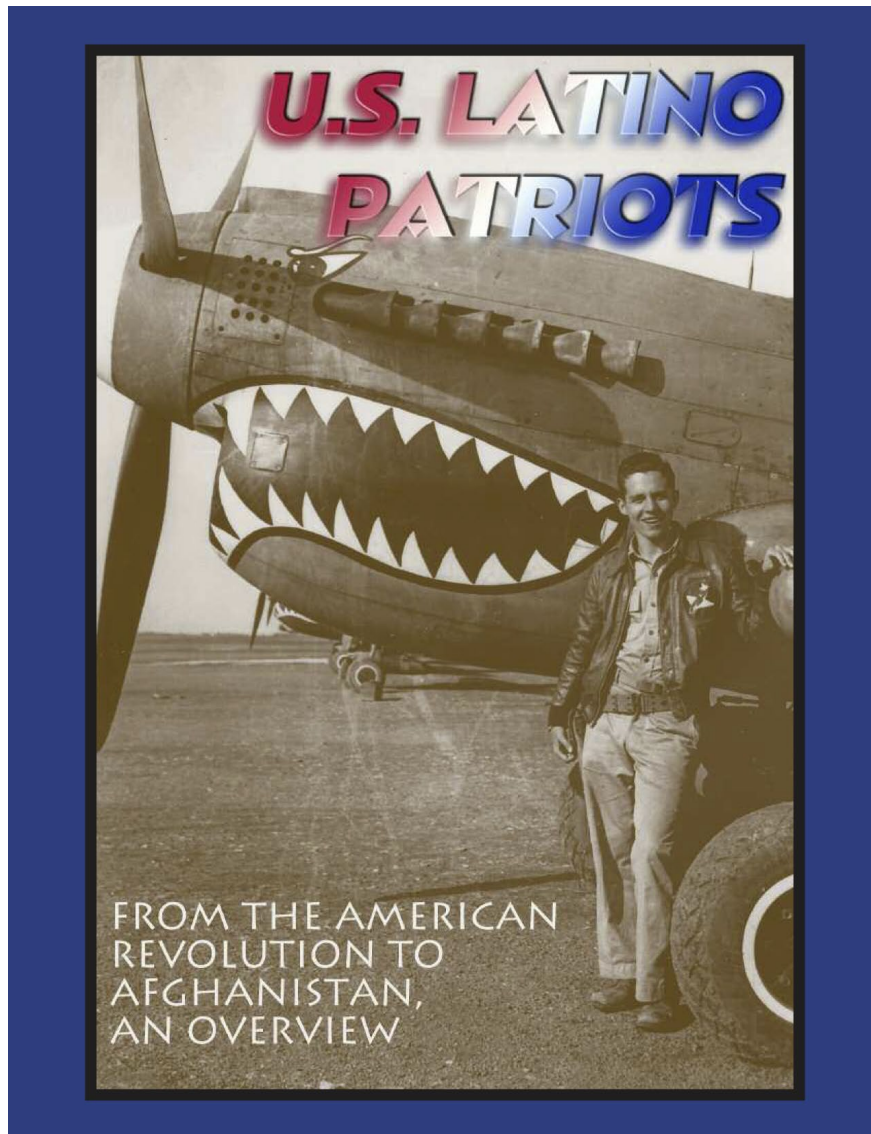


Figure 1. *US Latino Patriots: From the American Revolution to Afghanistan, An Overview*, by Refugio I. Rochín, Lionel Fernandez, and José Alonso Oliveros (Julian Samora Center at Michigan State University, 2005).

Unfortunately, there is far too much evidence to draw upon to illustrate our field's degeneration. The monograph, *US Latino Patriots: From the American Revolution to Afghanistan, An Overview*, published by the Julian Samora Center at Michigan State University in 2005, is illustrative of ideological contradictions that remain under-examined (see Figure 1). This uncritical celebration of Raza complicity in US settler colonialism and imperialism is not uncommon. By featuring this publication as evidence of our field's ideological and methodological degeneration, I am not suggesting that we should not study Raza soldiering. On the contrary; this is a field of great interest to me as well. But in the 21st century we should not still be celebrating our complicities—complex as they are—in US imperialism, preceding settler colonialism, and outright genocide. I should add that our field's continued celebration of the Soldado Razo is challenged through very important counterpoints by Jorge Mariscal, Lorena Oropeza, Belinda Rincon, Ariana Vigil, Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, and many more NACCS scholars. But our field continues to ground many of its salient paradigms—the generational progress narrative, for instance—in the reification of this archetypal male warrior hero from the WWII era. Ironically, attempts to “revise” this archetype by recovering *Soldada* Razo figures such as the Soldadera and various analogues have more often than not served to reify Raza containment within the empire in the guise of marking our resistance to it. I realize we are talking about our family members, and this demands respectful treatment and an awareness that *concientización* sometimes is a privilege of a college education that many of our gente will never access, particularly those who are caught in the de facto economic draft and hypermasculinist socialization and mystification that leads them into barrio warfare, prison, and the military. But we have a responsibility to be thorough in our understanding of soldiering, citizenship, and power. I believe our field largely has failed in this *deber*. Indeed, except for the aforementioned scholars, the vast majority extant research on Raza soldiering continues to lionize Raza male, and now female as well as LGBTQI+ soldiering, as counterhegemonic agency despite a wide and complex ideological range. N'mbre, shaddup, lo estamos cagando.



Figure 2. George P. Bush at the Latino Leadership Award Ceremony, Center for Mexican American Studies and Department of Mexican American and Latina/o Studies, University of Texas at Austin, March 30, 2015.

As if our reification of Raza warrior heroes, imperialists, and even fascists like General Ricardo Sánchez—the commanding US Army officer during the Abu Ghraib prisoner torture episode—were not bad enough, Raza Studies centers have done worse. The Center for Mexican American Studies and Department of Mexican American and Latina/o Studies (MALS) at the University of Texas at Austin bestowed their inaugural 2015 Latino Leadership Award to George P. Bush, the son of a Mexican mother and white father, Jeb Bush, the former governor of Florida (see Figure 2). He also is the grandson and nephew to two U.S. Presidents—George H. Bush and George W. Bush—both staunch neo-liberals, anti-communists, and instigators of U.S. imperialist wars that led to the Abu Ghraib Prison horror among other atrocities that approach genocide. George P. Bush, a US Naval Reserve Officer deployed during the War on Terror, has overtly defended and even promoted the imperialist politics of his family members, and has even enacted them. Worse, he is now a candidate for Texas Attorney General who promises to “finish the work Donald Trump started,”

including extension of the border wall and increased Border Patrol funding, all of which will lead to more deaths of Raza.



Figure 3. The Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, circa 2020.

It gets worse. In 2020, the Luís Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature, awarded annually by the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB), was bestowed upon Francisco Cantú, a former Border Patrol Officer who authored a memoir, *The Line Becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border*. (See Figures 3 and 4.) This award was created in 2003 and is named after the late Chicano literary scholar Luís Leal, who helped create the field of Chicano literary studies.

The 2020 Leal Award is so profoundly dissonant with the history and spirit of Chicana Studies that it actually constitutes a violence. This is especially so for undocumented students at UCSB, who could not miss posters throughout campus announcing a former Migra was arriving to receive an award by the Chicana and Chicano Studies Department for writing about being a Migra officer. I should add that this is my current institution and my complaints and efforts to halt this pendejada were ignored: in fact, the flier announcing this event lists eleven co-sponsors, including the current Luís Leal Chair in Chicana and Chicano Studies, who is a recipient of the NACCS Scholar Award! As mi primo Freddie Porras, a barrio educator, grassroots activists, and decades-long member of NACCS would say, “¡¿Qué chingaos?!”

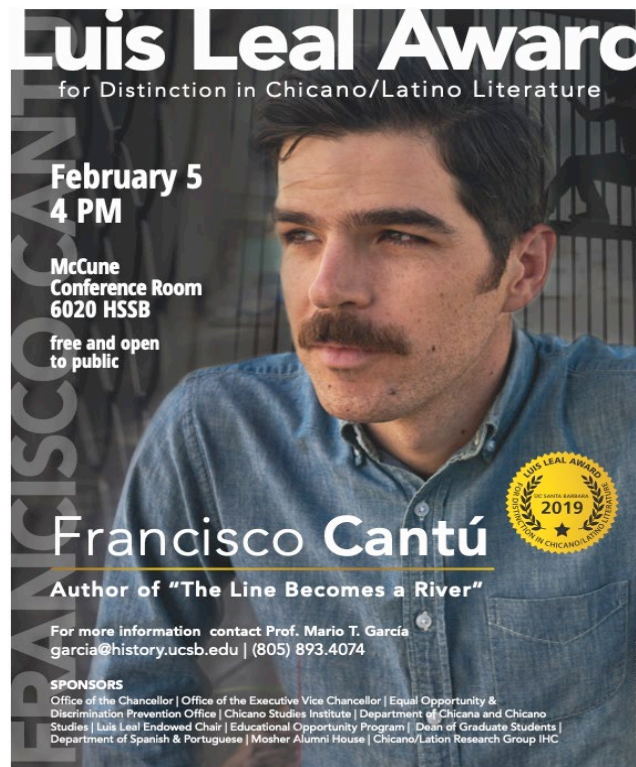


Figure 4. Poster for the University of California Santa Barbara Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies 2020 Luis Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature Award Ceremony.

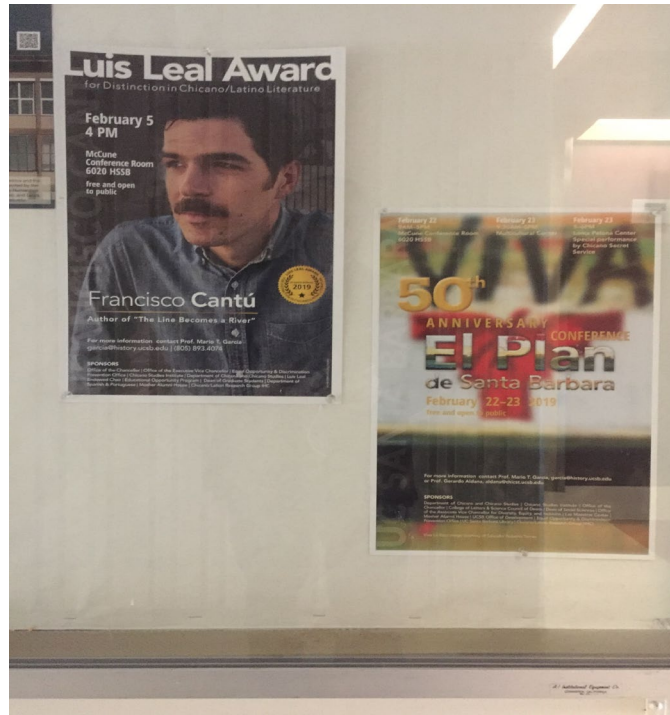


Figure 5. Posters for the Luís Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature & 50th Anniversary of El Plan De Santa Barbara, at the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara. February 5 & February 22, 2020.

Everyone at NACCS knows that UCSB is the site where El Plan de Santa Barbara was drafted. Ironically, the 50th anniversary commemoration of this epochal document that led to the creation of Chicana/o/x Studies was held in the same department just two weeks after the Migra Officer award ceremony. The posters of both events remained posted—side by side—in the department’s display box for a full year! (See Figure 5.) Sometimes all you can say is “¡Qué chingaos!”

I can go on about other instances, such as the fact that a former director of two Raza studies centers was a staunch member of the Republican Party, which provided funding for Raza Studies events. In fact, he is not the only Raza Republican involved in Chicanx and Latinx Studies! Y para no acabar de chingar, when I was a graduate student at Stanford University, the undergraduate members of MEChA changed their constitution to explicitly include Republicans! I am not saying we should not address or exclude such figures from the field. On the

contrary, as I noted from the start, I think we need to recover and assess them critically through properly historicized and contextualized analysis. Except for two decades of virulent criticism of Richard Rodriguez's anti-bilingual política and Eurocentric epistemology in the 1980s and 1990s, the field has not thoroughly attended to Raza conservatives, and much less the more overtly right-wing Raza. And we also have failed to assess and intervene into the ideological degeneration of our field that sometimes includes Raza conservatives among its ranks, and which also involves the celebration of Raza reactionaries! It is one thing to study this phenomenon; but it is another thing to weave them into the paradigm driving the field if we still want to claim that the field is oppositional to capitalism and imperialism.

Towards a Meta-Critique of Raza Studies:

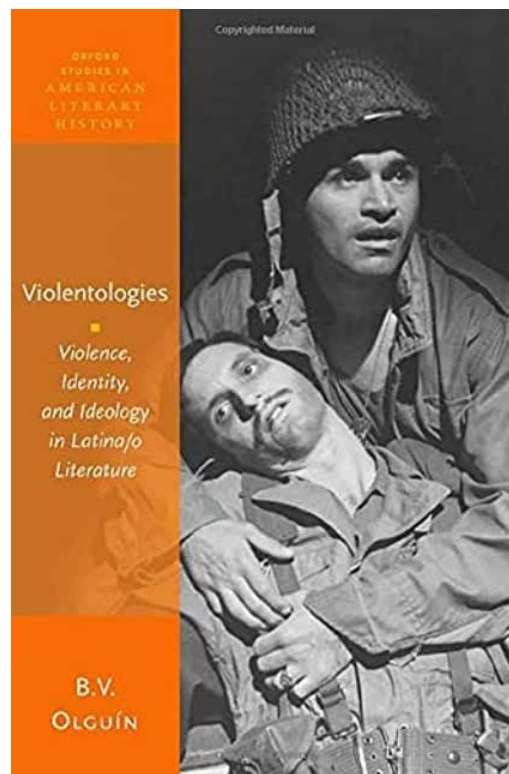


Figure 6. *Violentologies: Violence, Identity, and Ideology in Latina/o Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2021)

Despite all these pendejadas, there refreshingly is great amount of activist-based scholarship from NACCS scholars that points the way towards a new synthesis. I am inspired by my co-panelists, and especially our moderator Roberto Hernández, and by many more. To close, I would like to note a bit about the small intervention I am trying to make in my new book—*Violentologies: Violence, Identity, and Ideology in Latina/o Literature*, just released by Oxford University Press (see Figure 6). The operative term in this book—violentologies—is a neologism formed by the fusion of violence, ontology, and epistemology. It thus participates in ongoing dialogues about the multiple violences that have shaped, and continue to shape, Raza history, culture, identity, and politics. Pursuant to this goal I have tried to look at these phenomena through a different lens than purely identity or even class politics. Specifically, I seek to map the ways Raza are interpellated through various forms of violence into new subjects—I use the term Supra-Latinx to signal that these new formations go through, but frequently far beyond, our conventional understanding of Chicanidad and Latinidad. This enables me to free Raza subjects from our overdetermined renderings. I ultimately argue that these nuanced, and sometimes new supra-Latinx—and sometimes post-Latinx—subjects demand a paradigm shift that more accurately accounts for the myriad ways we navigate power. Here are a few examples of the discrepant Raza archive that are demanding a radical re-orientation of Raza Studies towards a meta-critical praxis.

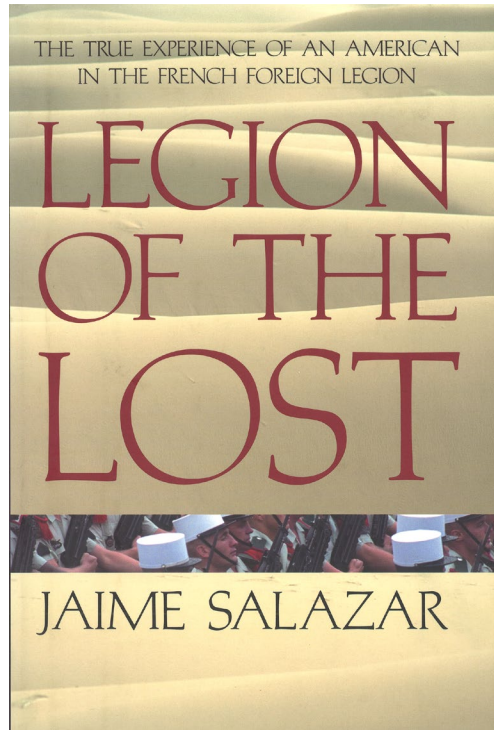


Figure 7. Cover from the 2005 edition of *Legion of the Lost* (Dutton Caliber).



Figure 8. Jaime Salazar, Chicano Volunteer in the French Foreign Legion, Paris, France 1999.

I open the book with a discussion of a Chicano volunteer in the French Foreign Legion, Jaime Salazar (see Figures 7 and 8). Through interviews and readings of his memoir in relation to other Raza who fought in France in WWI and WWII—particularly my family members—I note how this supra-Chicano Soldado Razo both critiques and rejects the US. Yet, he also serves in a counter-imperialist military—the French Foreign Legion no less, which is a French unit composed of colonial subjects and subalterns from throughout the world. This makes his critique of US imperialism merely a counter-imperialism, albeit quite complex in ways as I discuss in my book.

Jaime Salazar is not alone in modeling the intertwining of cultural nationalism with imperialisms. For instance, I also examine Latinx Muslims, with close explications of Chicana and Boricua Muslim Hip Hop artists who variously critique US empire, albeit through ideologically inchoate poetics. For instance, Chicano Abu Nurah, originally David Chavez from Pico Rivera in Los Angeles, makes allusions to Islamic socialism, but quickly segues into a counter-imperialism through invocations of the restoration of a global Muslim Caliphate.

The Boricua duo that make up Mujahedeen Team—Hamza and Suleiman Perez—do something similar while simultaneously intertwining their advocacy for Puerto Rican independence from the US. They are famous for performing onstage with a flaming machete, in an allusion to the Macheteros, or Boricua National Liberation Army.

I must note that Raza Muslims run a huge ideological gamut, which I examine, such as activists and spoken word artists Robert Farid Karimi, of Iranian and Guatemalan heritage, and Mark Gonzales, of Tunisian and Mexican heritage, both of whom are born and raised in the US, but use a completely new nomenclature and epistemology than we are accustomed to in Aztlán.

The discrepant archive includes myriad Raza imperialist and even fascists soldiers and paramilitary officers, including in the CIA. I recover this cadre of Raza to explicate how their cultural nationalist discourses are fully allied with US imperialism. In many instances, such as the work of former CIA officer Antonio Burciaga, their work both segues with leftist Raza, and is even centered as quintessentially Raza. This alone should demand that we reassess the ideological underpinnings of our many claims to oppositional status as Chicana gente.

My book also examines the works of Chicana and broader Latinx neo-orientalists travelers throughout the Muslim world. This includes dozens of books that include Latina feminist orientalists such as Ana Menendez and Stephanie

Elizondo Greist, in addition to Chicano exoticist Orientalist writings by Rudolfo Anaya, J. Malcolm Garcia, and many more.

Significantly, very many more case studies introduce profound new syntheses that are not quite decolonial but still outside the US, Aztlán, and even the Americas, for which a new nomenclature is required. I spend time discussing ChicaNisei, ChiKorean, LatinAsian, and myriad LatIndia/o subjects, such as Boricua Taíno Lakota AfroLatIndia/o Two-Spirit performer Felipe Rose of the famous band, The Village People.

The list of neologistic nominatives is much longer and, I believe, necessary for understanding the ideologically inchoate spectacles I discussed earlier in my reference to some of the things happening in Chicax Studies Departments and Centers. But more importantly, we need to find new ways of accounting for subjects who perform, inhabit, embody, and simply are Chicax and Latinx in so many different ways—individually and ideologically—than the ways we have been doing in our field. The X in Chicax is a great place to start. But I think we need more. Thank you.

PART TWO: Movement and Movements of Community

Rezo a Tonantzin

Tonantzin

madre de todo
lo que de ti vive,
es, habita, mora, está;
Madre de todos los dioses
las diosas
madre de todos nosotros,
la nube y el mar
la arena y el monte
el musgo y el árbol
el ácaro y la ballena.

Derramando flores
haz de mi manto un recuerdo
que jamás olvidemos que tú eres
único paraíso de nuestro vivir.

Bendita eres,
cuna de la vida, fosa de la muerte,
fuente del deleite, piedra del sufrir.

concédenos, madre, justicia,
concédenos, madre, la paz.

©Rafael Jesús González

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Mi Universidad: Empowering Youth with Popular Education Pedagogy and Community Cultural Wealth¹

Ana M. Ardón*, Ricardo Favela*, Rafael J. Hernández*, Mario Millan*, Monica Muro*, Arcela Nuñez-Alvarez**, Jessica Ramírez*, Rosalva A. Romero*, Angelica Santiago*, Gemma Serrano*, Cindy Torres***²

Rooted in the philosophy of El Plan de Santa Barbara, the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program (Homie UP YEP) was created by the community-based organization Universidad Popular (UP) and the National Latino Research

¹ We are grateful for the generosity, dedication, and hard work of the many contributors and supporters of the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program Mi Universidad 2020 Summer College Immersion Program, including (but not limited to): Dr. Arcela Nuñez-Alvarez, Dr. Marisol Clark-Ibáñez, Angelica Santiago, Ana M. Ardón, Mario Millan, Lilian Serrano, Ricardo Favela, Jessica Ramirez, Rosalva A. Romero, Karen Campos, Monica Muro, Jennifer Lopez, Dr. Rafael Hernández, Alonzo Martínez, Christina Flores Lopez, Flor Alvarez, Daisy Resendiz, Daniel Martinez, Stephanie L. Martinez, Karina Romero, Gemma Serrano, our community partners, and the Homie UP YEP families and youth leaders.

Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program is supported by Award No. MP-AIA-17-001, Minority Youth Violence Prevention II grant program, from the Office of Minority Health (OMH) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

² *National Latino Research Center (NLRC), California State University San Marcos (CSUSM)

**Universidad Popular (UP), California

***Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program

Authors listed in alphabetical order.

Center (NLRC) at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) with the goal of making Chicana Studies curriculum available to the local community. Homie UP YEP specifically sought to meet the needs of youth by applying popular education pedagogy (Freire) to cultivate community cultural wealth (Yosso). Since 2018, Homie UP YEP's college summer-immersion program, Mi Universidad, has focused on enhancing community cultural wealth through educational attainment, life skills, health and well-being, family engagement, civic engagement, and cultural enrichment for local Chicana/Latina youth and families in North County San Diego, California. Our paper discusses Homie UP YEP's development, research, and college summer-immersion program curriculum, as well as navigating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our community and programming, and centering the voices and experiences of Homie UP YEP participants and community educators.

Who We Are

I, Arcela Nuñez Alvarez, am a Chicana immigrant who came from Mexico and settled in the City of San Marcos, California when I was 12 years old, where I have lived for almost forty years with my family. San Marcos is also the home of the California State University campus, where our work has resided since 1998. I began my teaching and community-organizing journey in high school when I joined MEChA. It was with MEChA that I learned precious ancestral knowledge and the importance of community service and civic participation—core values that continue to guide my personal and professional life.

Seventeen years ago, I joined the National Latino Research Center at California State University San Marcos with the vision of creating a safe and welcoming space for Brown students to come together, learn, teach, appreciate culture, and prepare for life after graduation. One of our guiding frameworks was El Plan de Santa Barbara, a plan that made abundantly clear the importance of supporting Chicana and Chicano students in their educational journey, creating programs and departments that are culturally responsive and connected to the local service community.

Seeing the need in our community to educate and support the entire family, with a group of community leaders, we started Universidad Popular. Inspired by the great educator Paulo Freire, we answered our calling to become *maestras del pueblo*, teaching for liberation. We are a nontraditional educational organization cultivating leadership, freedom, health, wisdom, and dignity.

Through our teaching, we bring to life key principles of democracy, empowering ordinary people to own our voice and use our power to shape our community.

National Latino Research Center

The mission of the National Latino Research Center (NLRC) at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) is to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of rapidly growing U.S. Latinx populations through applied action research, training, technical assistance, and the exchange of information. Specializing in applied action research, NLRC brings together key stakeholders from the community, government, nonprofit sector, and private industry to identify solutions and develop strategies to address local and regional challenges.³

Twenty years ago, the NLRC joined the movement to uplift and validate the interdisciplinary process of inquiry for social change known as community-based participatory action research (PAR). PAR involves engaging community residents and stakeholders in identifying and studying a social issue, developing solutions and putting them into action. One of the ways we activate PAR is by offering student internships, service-learning, and volunteering opportunities to college students of color who are members of the local communities. We provide hands-on experiential learning and the opportunity for students to return to their communities and give back as leaders and teachers.

Universidad Popular

Universidad Popular was brought to life by a group of community leaders and educators in collaboration with Latinos y Latinas en Acción in the City Heights neighborhood of San Diego, California with the mission of providing a space where Latino and Latina immigrants could convene and learn. The program expanded into North County San Diego where it has flourished and continues to grow.

Universidad Popular offers programs throughout North County San Diego with the intent of capturing community knowledge and fostering appreciation for traditional know-how while strengthening family and community cohesion. Specifically, we are bringing families together for communal learning where elders share wisdom about healing, crafts, farming, cooking, writing, etc., and youth teach technology, physical activity, multimedia, etc. The goal is to teach

³ For more information about NLRC, please visit www.csusm.edu/nlrc.

living skills and to learn from each other. For us, it is about building self-reliance in a unique multi-generational setting and to facilitate hands-on learning experiences.

Community Profile

The 78-Corridor: North County San Diego

We acknowledge that the land on which we reside is the traditional territory and homelands of the Luiseño/Payómkawichum people. Today, the meeting place of CSUSM in North County San Diego and its surrounding areas is still home to the six federally recognized bands of the La Jolla, Pala, Pauma, Pechanga, Rincon, Soboba Luiseño/Payómkawichum people. It is also important to acknowledge that this land remains the shared space among the Kuupangaxwicheh/Cupeño and Kumeyaay and Ipai peoples.⁴

The communities along the 78-Corridor, named for the State Route 78 highway, include the cities of Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos, and Escondido. The region is geographically dispersed and includes remote rural, agricultural, and mountainous areas to the east. Latinx families of Mexican origin heavily populate the northern region of San Diego County, comprising 1 out of 3 residents.⁵

Latinxs comprise the largest sector of frontline essential workers in the region. Approximately half of the population is Spanish speaking, with various levels of English-speaking abilities; this includes immigrants from Mexico and Central America. We work in the northern region of San Diego County, less than 60 miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border port of entry. North County San Diego is a border community surrounded by immigration checkpoints. Being part of the movement to build people power has given us first-hand knowledge of privileges and barriers affecting civic participation among immigrants and Latinx communities who are still grossly underrepresented in key civic and leadership positions.

Theoretical Frameworks

Popular Education Pedagogy

Universidad Popular uses popular education pedagogy; it presents educational material through a culturally appropriate and responsive lens in

⁴ For more information, please visit The California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center <https://www.csusm.edu/cicsc/>.

⁵ See Table 1 for a demographic profile of North County San Diego.

English, Spanish and bilingual formats, which resonate with participants' histories and lived experiences. We employ Paulo Freire's approach of dialectic interchange and kinesthetic learning. An essential element to the model is empowerment and connecting students' learning with their role in creating positive social change. Universidad Popular builds on a resilient tradition of resistance known as *educación popular*, or popular education, meaning education of the people. This model of education is most commonly known as a liberating pedagogy through which an individual becomes aware of their own personal experiences and how these experiences are connected to the larger society.

Community Cultural Wealth

Tara J. Yosso defines community cultural wealth as “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (77). We use this strengths-based framework that highlights the importance of beliefs and practices originating from family and cultures of immigrant communities and communities of color. Yosso's framework describes at least six forms of cultural capital, which guide our work in the following ways.

Social Capital. Supportive networks of people and community resources help families transcend the adversity in their daily lives. The NLRC has successfully built a network of community-based partners that work together to comprehensively address risk and protective factors for youth and families through services, resources, outreach and education.

Navigational Capital. ‘Critical navigational skills’ empower Homie UP YEP participants to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind. Curriculum, programming, tutoring, and mentoring enhance college preparation, civic engagement, and skills for safe, responsible, and critical social media use to prepare youth and families to navigate complex social institutions and infrastructures.

Aspirational Capital. This form of capital is the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real or perceived barriers. The NLRC has successfully facilitated university and community resources to create a bridge for youth to attend their local university and have access to college experiences.

Resistant Capital. Knowledge of the structures of racism, nativism, sexism, classism, etc. and skills and motivation to transform such oppressive

structures can come from parents, community members and a historical legacy of resistance to subordination. Located within the 100-mile U.S.-Mexico border zone, Homie UP YEP exists in a unique region that enhances the knowledge and study of local history and civic engagement through community organizations whose mission is to advocate for local needs such as Universidad Popular, Alianza Comunitaria, and the San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium (SDIRC).

Familial Capital. Those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin)—which may include immediate or extended family (living or long passed on) as well as friends who we might consider part of our *familia*—carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition. Intergenerational learning approaches facilitate the integration of the family unit (e.g. parents, youth, and extended family members) and improve program commitment and civic engagement.

Linguistic Capital. The intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style, this form of capital also refers to the ability to communicate via visual art, music, poetry, and a storytelling tradition which may include listening to and recounting oral histories, parables, *cuentos* (stories) and *dichos* (proverbs). Trained NLRC staff and interns are bilingual and bicultural whose experiences reflect those of program participants. Communication with families and programming for youth incorporate linguistically and culturally responsive strategies.

Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program

The NLRC, in collaboration with CSUSM researchers and numerous community partners, implements the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program (Homie UP YEP) a community-based youth empowerment model for youth of color that focuses on educational attainment, civic engagement, restorative justice, and cultural enrichment. The program provides education based on critical pedagogy (Freire) with the aim of providing hope, opportunity for meaningful reflection, critical consciousness and other elements of humanity for minoritized youth. Homie UP YEP also contributes to youth wellness and development by providing an outlet for cultural appreciation and creative expression. Homie UP YEP offers educational opportunities and mitigates trauma by providing intensive and comprehensive services in the context of an after-school youth program in North County San Diego, California.

The program has been open to the community since January 2018. Until the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown in March 2020, the program operated from Centro Universidad Popular, located in the heart of the Latinx community in Vista, California. For the last year, program coordinators and staff seamlessly transitioned from in-person program delivery to virtual programming. Homie UP YEP has been able to continue serving youth and families during the pandemic shutdown, facilitating resources and information related to COVID-19 concerns and needs such as the facilitation of pandemic relief funds, unemployment benefit applications, and rental assistance through community networks.

Homie UP YEP Research Design

The research and evaluation plan focuses on assessing the effectiveness and impact of the after-school youth program. We assess the risk factors that hinder the opportunities of youth at the institutional and systemic level, and the protective factors necessary to improve social, health, and educational outcomes. We use quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate impact; data are collected over time, first during enrollment as baseline data, followed by annual assessments.

Quantitatively, we collect and analyze demographic data from youth and their families such as gender, race, and ethnicity. We collaborate with the local school district to collect and analyze academic progress through GPA, college preparatory course completion, promotion rates, graduate rates, and disciplinary actions. We also collect data on an ongoing basis of youth and family participation in the program through attendance and participation logs, tutoring logs, and pre-/post-tests to assess knowledge gained during workshops. Furthermore, we conduct two national surveys: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) that assesses youth's risk of violence, substance use, and nutrition, and the Child & Youth Resiliency Measure (CYRM) that assesses youth's resilience at the individual, family, and community level.

Qualitatively, we engage with youth and families to document their experiences through reflection sessions, journal entries, oral histories, and community conversations. Monthly Family Nights engage parents in discussion about their concerns, needs, and recommendations to improve the program. Community educators conduct activities with youth to teach about local history and document their own family histories through video storytelling.

Homie UP YEP Demographics

Table 2 provides the demographic profile of Homie UP YEP participants and their families over a four-year period, collected during enrollment or baseline. Youth participation in the program increased over the three-year period, from 55 in Year 1 to close to 100 youth and families in Year 3. Enrollment and participation decreased during Year 4 as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. We have maintained an equal number of students based on gender. All youth are Latinx, and most are of Mexican origin. However, we see a growing number of students of Central American descent. When asked to share their racial background, students self-reported they are white, black, or Native American. Most student chose “other” as their racial category and provided responses such as Hispanic, Latinx, Mexican, Chicanx, or Azteca/Mayan. We collect family information including household income and housing. Most families have a median monthly income of less than \$2,000 and live in multi-unit complexes such as apartments or condominiums.

Mi Universidad Narratives

Mi Universidad 2020 Curriculum

The COVID-19 public health crisis forced an unexpected shift to remote youth programming for Homie UP YEP, which demanded innovative strategies for overcoming obstacles to teaching, access, and support in an uncertain time. Rising to the challenge, the Homie UP YEP team developed a relevant and culturally appropriate curriculum of integrated courses responsive to the needs of our local youth in a virtual learning environment. In the summer of 2020, Mi Universidad classes focused on Chicanx/Latinx communities, experiences, and local history, nurturing connections with family/cultural roots and a legacy of resilient resistance to white supremacy, systemic racism, and police violence disproportionately targeting Black and Brown communities. Classes also focused on college preparation, identity exploration, self-care, coping and emotional intelligence, ensuring a fair and accurate count in the 2020 U.S. Census, and being safe, responsible, and critical users/producers of (social) media for social good.

Introduction to Chicanx Studies. *Community Educators: Lilian Serrano, Gemma Serrano, and Karina Romero.* The major purpose of this course was to educate students to be politically, socially, and economically conscious about their personal connections to local and national history. This course facilitated

discussions concerning personal and social identities, specifically Chicax identity, and the historical context behind the development of the Chicax movement.

Media Studies: Media & Youth Impact. *Community Educators: Ricardo Favela, Stephanie Martinez, and Gemma Serrano.* The goal of this course was to have students learn how to use and filter media in a critical, healthy, and responsible manner and to learn storytelling as a means of empowerment. Students learned video production and produced original videos. The class aimed to have students make the transition from being media consumers to media producers and engage in the battle of stories and narratives regarding Brown youth.

Raíces de Acción. *Community Educators: Rafael Hernández, Jennifer Lopez, and Rosalva Romero.* Learning activities and discussions explored systemic racism, identity, self-care, mindfulness meditation, and critical reflection to gain perspectives on the struggles of current and previous generations and connect with a historical legacy of resilient resistance to oppression. Guided by conceptual frameworks including *nepantla* (Anzaldúa), *in lak' ech*, *panche be*, *yaxche baalche*, *tezcacatlipoca*, *huitzilopochtli*, *quetzalcoatl*, *xipe totec* (Rodríguez), community cultural wealth (Yosso), and integrating knowledge gained from other Mi Universidad classes, Raíces de Acción supported youth leaders in developing practical strategies for change to build a better future for our communities and ourselves in positive, progressive, and creative ways.

Ourstory: K-6 Reading Circle. *Community Educators: Ana M. Ardón, Jennifer Lopez, Monica Muro, Jessica Ramirez, Karina Romero, Rosalva Romero, Angelica Santiago, and Gemma Serrano.* A reading program for students in grades K-6 designed to strengthen academic activities and improve students' reading abilities during summer, centered in the principles of popular education to promote and increase the knowledge of Latinx and Chicax histories, community experiences, and storytelling.

Second Step. *Community Educators: Mario Millan, Jennifer Lopez, and Rosalva Romero.* The *Second Step* (Committee for Children) curriculum sought to address and promote emotional wellness in the participants. It was adapted and modified to meet our community and youth needs by Homie UP YEP staff to ensure cultural responsiveness and highlight social issues. The students participated in discussions about identity, social groups, stereotypes and perceptions associated with social groups, and handling emotions when faced

with overwhelming negative interactions. The Identity Map activity, especially, served to bring to mind the interaction between someone’s personal identity and their social and political world.

Our Communities Count. *Community Educators: Ana M. Ardón, Jessica Ramírez, Rosalva Romero, and Angelica Santiago.* The year 2020 materialized thoughts of a historic presidential election and the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, 2020 also marked the decennial census count. Under the Trump Administration, communities of color across the nation endured four years of Trump spewing anti-immigrant rhetoric and enacting policies that were attacks towards immigrants and communities of color. The 2020 Census was no exception with the Trump Administration’s attempt to add a citizenship question, shifting the 2020 census deadlines, and claiming that undocumented community members would be excluded from the census count.

NLRC and UP were part of the Count Me 2020 Census Education & Outreach Campaign in Region 10 of California (San Diego and Imperial Counties) and worked diligently to continue outreach efforts and promote census engagement during and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic alongside a collective of tíos, tías, students, and elders in the Latino community of North County San Diego. Yosso explains that *familial capital* entails “a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a broader understanding of kinship” (79). NLRC and UP utilized the community cultural wealth model to work alongside *familias* and local community members to ensure Latinx presence was not only recognized via a complete count, but would also be monetized via vital federal funding that would come to the states to contribute to the well-being of every Californian⁶.

Under the leadership of Dr. Arcela Nuñez Alvarez, NLRC and UP integrated an outreach approach that was multi-generational, highlighting census questionnaire completion as a civic responsibility and civic duty, and elevated community networks to spread census messaging. Universidad Popular developed

⁶ As of April 26, 2021, the United States Census Bureau (USCB) released apportionment data indicating that California had lost a congressional seat bringing the total down to 52. By September 30, 2021 states and the public are expected to have access to the final redistricting data. To access the “2020 Census Apportionment Counts Press Kit” that contains details on the data and a news release by the USCB from April 26, 2021, please visit <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/dec/2020-apportionment-data.html>. To stay informed on the redistricting process, access the 2020 California Citizens Redistricting Commission website, <https://www.wedrawthelinesca.org/>.

a culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum that the Homie UP YEP program utilized and modified into a youth version titled “Our Communities Count.” The curriculum entailed educating youth about the significance of the decennial census and training youth to utilize their power and connections to inform and motivate their social networks to complete the 2020 Census with the intention of increasing response rates in the community. The curriculum embraced census education as a form of empowerment and covered the following topics: Census 101 education, the history of race & ethnicity on the census, myths & community concerns about the census, and census messaging. At the beginning of the course, many youth leaders were unaware of the significance of the 2020 Census, but by week six youth leaders were working to reassure their families about the census with messaging on confidentiality and the facilitation and completion of census questionnaires in various households. In addition, many students also discovered that their families were aware of the 2020 Census due to their involvement in the outreach initiatives with the NLRC and UP. Youth leaders and their families worked to spread the message: We All Count / Todos Contamos. See below Testimonios from youth leaders.

College 101. Community Educators: Monica Muro, Rosalva Romero, and Angelica Santiago. By having a course in the summer where we educate and give resources for higher education, we are giving back to the community. Many coordinators and students within program are first generation college students and many have gone above and beyond to earn their master's degrees and Ph.D.s. We know the students want to learn and we know their potential. Working with these students the past year and a half, I (Monica Muro) have seen them grow as they go from adolescence to college-age young adults.

The College Readiness curriculum was taught with the intention of presenting students the opportunity to envision college as a possibility. During this class, we used the *Realizing the College Dream: Teacher Adviser Guide* curriculum developed by the Center for Education Partnerships, University of California Berkeley, ECMC Foundation. We tailored the curriculum to meet our community and youth needs. Additionally, we used storytelling to foster aspirational capital by sharing our own experiences transitioning from K-12 education to institutions of higher education.

Aspirational capital is defined as the ability to be resilient while also maintaining dreams. Patricia Gándara and others have demonstrated that, compared to other cohorts in the US, Chicanxs have minimal educational

outcomes (55). However, Chicanxs demonstrate high aspirations for the futures of their children. With storytelling and advice, we nurtured aspiration within social and cultural contexts and helped establish and build the goals needed to confront oppressive barriers. As argued by Yosso, these stories nurture a culture of possibility as they represent “the creation of a history that would break the links between parents’ current occupational status and their children’s future academic attainment” (78).

Our approach to the College Readiness course was to provide students the tools and skills necessary to navigate and succeed in the higher education system, fostering navigational capital (Yosso). We believe education goes far beyond the classroom. It is acquired knowledge that resides in our *familias* and *comunidades*. Education is transformative, an ongoing and endless process of growth. This class was intended to invigorate students to execute their leadership and readiness skills as scholars and encourage them to become active advocates in their community.

At the start of the class, students were asked where they saw themselves ten years from now, in hopes that they would approach this class with an enthusiastic and eager stance. Students held discussions on education and job opportunities by exploring individual interests and connecting those interests to potential careers. They examined this question using a Career Interest Survey and independent career research with the support of community educators. Secondly, this class introduced various approaches to prepare for college admission while discussing the benefits of a college education. To incorporate a better understanding in the college admissions process and the requirements of selected colleges or universities, students learned how to conduct research on State and Private Universities as well as Community Colleges. The youth were divided into breakout rooms where they worked with an instructor to further explore the college or university of their choice. Students also designed their own Individual Academic Action Plan to strategize and organize their future objectives. In addition, the curriculum included debunking the myths of financial aid and covered the numerous sources and types of financial aid available for students and their families. We also debunked the myths of attending college as a first-generation student. Finally, the class invited North County San Diego community educators to speak on their journey in academia and provide insight to first generation students navigating higher education spaces.

Testimonios: Mi Universidad Experience

Voice, Spaces, and Values

My name is Cindy Torres, and I have been a student in the Youth Empowerment Program for 4 years. I am currently in the 9th grade at Vista High School. During the summer, I was able to share some of my own experiences to contribute to the classes we were taught. For Media Studies, we shared a picture of our ‘story objects’—something that represents us and is important to us. I shared my ‘Winnie the Pooh’ stuffed animal because it has been with me for over 14 years, since I was born. We—all the students and staff—also collaborated on making a map of where our parents were born, and where we were born for our Chicana Studies class by marking the locations with different colored stickers. This helped paint a picture of where our parents were from, where they were raised, and later where they migrated from Mexico to California to make our lives better. Lastly, something that was important to me from the *Raíces de Acción* class was that we would always repeat the In’Lak Ech poem: Tú eres mi otro yo / You are my other me. Si te hago daño a ti / If I do harm to you, Me hago daño a mí mismo / I do harm to myself. Si te amo y respeto / If I love and respect you, Me amo y respeto yo / I love and respect myself (Valdez).

This poem, In’Lak Ech, shows that we are family, we are there for each other, we would love each other even if some days we would not get along. We would always be together, have fun, and be positive toward each other. We were welcoming toward each other, and we would welcome whoever came through our doors with open arms. Everybody, the students and the staff, was kind and treated you with respect. We were always allowed to use our voices and speak on what we thought about things going on and especially using our voices to keep the space safe and positive for everyone, to stick up for one another. The space at Centro Universidad Popular was like our home. We had areas to relax and hang out with friends, we would always have snacks and food to eat after school, and we would find so many different things to have fun with after we finished with our work. The program was focused on building connections, providing students with a space for them, and sharing knowledge between the staff, participants, and families.

Positive and Motivated to Engage: Difference in School and the Program

In school, we learned some skills that can help us in our work, but we did not know we had other skills until we got to the Youth Empowerment Program, and the staff and tutors helped us develop them. We became much better at using these skills, and we became better people because we did not focus on just academic skills, we were learning life skills. Something else that was different in the program was that people in school and outside of school have told me that my thinking is ‘wrong’; they want me to ‘Do things how I want you to do them.’ It never felt like that in the program; we were never told the way we did things was ‘wrong’, we were just taught how to do things differently and if what we were doing worked for us then the staff and tutors would move forward with our ways. We were also free to do what we wanted. We did not have as many rules in the program as there are in school. This allowed us to have better and more active social lives and have our own space with no one to judge us. The staff would check in on us and watch over us to make sure we were safe in whatever we were doing.

Pandemic and Stay at Home Orders

Due to the pandemic and being in quarantine, we cannot do everything we used to do; we cannot be together, close, or in contact. Everyone has to go through this and go through a virtual world. Now we do tutoring online, we do workshops online. All the stuff we used to do normally in the program we are doing online now. We still try to make the online workshops fun. Just because we cannot be together or be in the same place, it does not mean we do not like to stay in touch or have fun when we connect. However, something positive did come out of quarantine and this pandemic. In my family, we did not used to talk as much as we do now. We would always just wake up and eat breakfast then go to work or school. Then when we came home, the only time we would be together and talking again was during dinner. The pandemic and lockdown have helped me connect with my family again, while still getting all the help and knowledge we need from the program online.

Our Communities Count!

Being able to explain what I learned about the census to my mom was an eye-opening experience for both of us. She did not know anything about the census until I told her about all the benefits that come from completing it, and being from Mexico, she was surprised that everyone living in the U.S. was

supposed to be counted in the census, not just those who are citizens. I was excited to be part of the census workshop during the summer because my family learned that we count, all of us. This will mean the communities could get more help with schools and other things that people need.

Insights of Youth Leaders on Being Trusted Messengers

As Homie UP YEP prepared youth leaders like Cindy Torres to become trusted messengers for their own families, the insights youth leaders were able to relay to their families became apparent. Another Homie UP YEP youth leader, Salma Lopez, age 14, recalls, “From this experience I was able to learn ways to communicate with my family members as well as learn what they already know about the census. One of the pictures [submitted during class] is important since I was able to explain to my mom more about how the census benefits everyone in the family including me since it will allow funding for schools and parks.” Salma’s younger sister, Jackie Lopez, age 13, also discussed her experience when talking about the census with her father, “I shared the information I learned with my family and taught them more of what they already knew. My parents were a bit surprised about the benefits of doing the census.”

Keeping in mind the political landscape in which 2020 left all of us, the Census curriculum was one of many ways in which communal power and informed action was promoted. In the words of Julian Ibañez, age 14, “Everyone matters and should be counted no matter what because it helps the small communities so they'll be able to build roads, help fund schools and if people don't get counted it could affect the community so you should always be counted because it would affect the people around you.”

Conclusion

Through the teachings of El Plan de Santa Barbara, Popular Education, Community Cultural Wealth, and reclaiming our stories, we know we have the duty to build and nurture the bridge from higher education institutions to our communities. Working with our communities, we can reclaim our space, be civically engaged, and dismantle the social, cultural, and economic barriers that have been placed in our communities. Furthermore, we envision the replication of the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program in other settings with the same vision to create a safe and welcoming space for Brown students to come together, to learn together, to teach together, to appreciate our culture, and most importantly to make a difference in our communities.

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Table 1. North County San Diego Demographic Profile

Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Latinxs comprise close to 40 percent of the population in the 78-Corridor of North County San Diego (Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos, and Escondido), reaching over half in cities like Vista and Escondido. (2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates)
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less than one-third of the population aged 18-24 is a high school graduate and only 8 percent has a bachelor’s degree or higher. (2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates) - Latina/o/x students on average represent over 60 percent of the population in K-12 system and most students in continuation and alternative schools (AY 2019-20, Ed-Data.org)
Juvenile Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - San Diego County has the second highest juvenile arrest rate (19.4) with San Bernardino at 23.0 in California. - Arrests rates are highest among Latina/o/x youth (22) and Black youth (69) compared to White youth (14.9).
Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 28 percent of the population lives in economic hardship at below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. (2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Table 2. Homie UP YEP Demographics

Homie UP YEP Demographics		YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4
		N=55	N=70	N=96	N=76
Gender	Male	30	34	50	38
	Female	25	36	46	36
Race/Ethnicity	Mexican	55	70	96	75
	Central American	2	2	2	1
	White	10	34	22	18
	Black	0	2	4	4
	Native American	1	1	3	2
Household	Median Monthly Income	\$ 1,800	\$ 1,625	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
	Apartment/Condo	55 %	42%	55 %	60 %
	Single-family home	36 %	47 %	27 %	25 %
	Mobile home	9 %	11 %	18 %	15 %
School Level	Middle school	60 %	59 %	63 %	53 %
	High school	40 %	41 %	37 %	47 %

Essential not Expendable: CoVid-19 and the Biopolitics of the Food Chain: *Project Protect Food System Workers*

Fatuma Emmad, U. Colorado-Boulder | Frontline Farms

Devon G. Peña, U. Washington | The Acequia Institute

The CoVid-19 pandemic in the USA rendered plainly visible the enduring disparate impacts and continuing aggression of racialized structural violence in the biopolitics of health.¹ The dominant neoliberal healthcare regime has commoditized health care. This mediates differential access to the conditions affecting life and death. The enduring health care inequities are a result of structural racism and are associated with settler colonial founding institutions that have long blocked BIPOC access to quality health care, safe workplace environments, and access to safe housing, clean water, and air. The centuries-long biopolitical marginalization of BIPOC bodies has been exasperated during the pandemic. It is no longer possible to hide the banality of neoliberal attacks on access to healthy, culturally-appropriate foods and foodways as a form of dietary class warfare and an abject expression of settler colonial logic targeting entire categories of BIPOC communities for elimination as expendable because these “non-citizen bodies” are at once “exploitable” and “unassimilable.”²

In actual political practice, neoliberal ideology presents a free market fundamentalist episteme. It presupposes a narrow ontological horizon derived from absolutist faith in hyper-individualism as the best fit for subjects to flourish

¹ See, for example: Abraham, et al. 2021; Evans 2020; Njoku 2021. In our context, by biopolitics we understand a struggle over life or more precisely over environmental and historical conditions like access to medical care and strong public health institutions that protect the life course and wellbeing of the population. The neoliberal settler colonial regime imposes conditions that produce disparate impacts (e.g., higher morbidity and mortality rates) through command over access as defined by segregated subgroups that are targeted by a ‘logic of elimination.’

² See the chapter by Tezozomoc in Peña, Calvo, McFarland, and Valle 2017 for more on “dietary class warfare.” In an earlier publication, co-author Peña defines this as the strategy characterized by Derrida as “letting die the other.” See Peña 2017, 61; 64.

under the dominant economic system of capitalism. This is clearly more than an act of epistemic violence. It launches direct attacks on the material and social conditions for the reproduction and health of populations and territories. Neoliberalism is especially intent on undermining the knowledge and policy claims tied to institutions of collective action (e.g., public health) including the autonomous traditions derived from BIPOC roots in millennial Indigenous ethnomedical epistemologies.³ We are not simply reducible to “bare life” subjects and are instead mobilizing resistance in a massive network of social movements. Our report presents a fisheye view of one such mobilization in the state of Colorado involving *Project Protect Food System Workers* which organized a network of promotoras (advocates) across the state while working towards successful passage of SB087, a Colorado’s Farm Worker Bill of Rights.

The Pandemic-Nutrition-Health Nexus

Substantial scientific evidence exists going back more than a decade on the role of epigenetic factors and their community health outcomes.⁴ The findings suggest that diet is one of the three principal factors affecting health. Alongside social economic status and exposure to environmental risks, diet is a major factor affecting our health. Moreover, some research links obesity and obesity-related diseases to severe COVID-19 outcomes. According to Belanger et al. (2020), it is “important to recognize how persistent disparities in nutrition and obesity play a key role in the health inequities highlighted during this pandemic.” Poor access to nutritious food complicates health disparities. So-called food deserts are often full of vendors that sell junk food, tobacco, and alcohol. This influences obesity and nutritional deficiencies, which intensify the harms of environmental pollution.

In Colorado, the Democratic-led Governor and legislature and the land grant university establishment at Colorado State University have failed to address the concerns of food chain workers and their activist/advocate networks. The State celebrated food chain workers as “essential” but in the end allowed growers

³ On ethnomedical knowledge and Indigenous healing epistemologies in Mexican-origin communities see for example: Lara 2008; Martinez-Cruz 2011; Morgan-Consoli and Unzueta 2018; Spears-Rico 2019.

⁴ On epigenetic (gene-environment) interactions as a factor affecting health outcomes that can be conditioned by disparate intergenerational impacts of environmental racism see, Rothstein, et al. 2017.

and other employers to mistreat them as “expendable” when it comes to addressing ‘susceptibility’ factors related to so-called preexisting conditions exacerbated by the pandemic. This was the situation in March 2020 when we first started meeting and collaborating on a range of interconnected problems presented by the convergence of the long history of settler colonial violence against food system workers and how the conditions of inequity and suppression have been magnified by pandemic conditions. In the end, our work resulted in the passage of Colorado’s Farm Worker Bill of Rights (discussed below). Project Protect also received funding to create a promotoras advocate network to assist agri-food system workers in negotiating and gaining access to healthcare, medicine, improved working conditions, and workers’ organizing rights.

CoVid-19 disparities and pre-existing conditions: A case of environmental racism

The CoVid-19 pandemic demonstrably presents numerous case studies in environmental racism.⁵ The pandemic is revealing racial and ethnic disparities in the prevalence of infected cases and deaths from infection. Scientific data show that Indigenous, Black, and People of Color (IBPOC) are experiencing higher rates of infection and mortality from the course of the disease.

1. Pre-existing conditions: Structural violence of environmental racism.

Pre-existing conditions are often mentioned to explain this trend. The factors that cause pre-existing conditions (e.g., obesity, diabetes, asthma, etc.) are linked to environmental racism. We are forced to work, live, study, play, pray, and eat in more polluted and higher risk environments. There are other manifestations of structural violence—inequitable access to medical and health care; the loss of traditional foods, diets, and foodways, suppression of worker organizing rights in the context of severely hazardous workplace and living conditions.

2. Biopolitics: “The politics of letting die the other.”

There are compounding factors affecting both infection rates and the seriousness of the infection on health outcomes. Pre-existing conditions make food system workers (FSWs) more vulnerable to serious illness or death from CoVid-19. These compounding factors include: (1) Lack of access to preventative or emergency health care due to uninsured or underinsured and uncertain legal status; (2)

⁵ On CoVid-19 pandemic and environmental racism in the agricultural sector, see: Mendez, Flores-Hano, and Zucker 2020; Montford and Wotherspoon 2021; Nojoku 2021;

Threats of apprehension and deportation; (3) Refusal of corporate management to provide PPE, social distancing, or allowances for workers to stay home when ill; (4) Agribusiness insistence on exemption from liability for illness or death from CoVid-19 infections; and (5) Attacks by white telluric partisans. These biopolitical conditions led us to create the Project Protect Food Systems Workers (Project Protect) in order to strengthen the workers' response to these challenges.

Project Protect Food System Workers

Data and findings from the work of a rapid response team organized in Colorado address the structural violence and environmental racism factors that have produced the disproportionate impacts of CoVid-19 in BIPOC communities. Our focus is on workers across the food chain with an emphasis on agricultural workers in the fields and processing plants.

Project Principles

- 1. Essential, not Expendable.** A contradiction of settler colonial (racial) capitalism is the existence of people whose marginalization both economically and socially is essential to the proper functioning of the economy. To recognize another's humanity is to treat that person with dignity, regardless of legal status in a particular location. Access to jobs, education, housing and a healthy environment in which to live are foundational supports for essential workers in any economic system.
- 2. No Justice, No Security.** We know the security of any system only exists in so far as the individuals and communities supporting that system are themselves secure. As long as workers are vulnerable to coercive threats from employers and the state the food system will not be secured.
- 3. Protection of Workers & Environment is Good Business.** The food system will be secure when workers are owners, when they are well paid and their families are well fed and housed decently. The food system will be secure when farmworkers are known and respected as land stewards. The food system will be secure when animals meet their end in culturally appropriate ways that honor the relationship between humans and our animal relations.

4. **Equity in Risk and Opportunity.** The essential but expendable paradigm reveals that some are called upon to potentially sacrifice their lives for the wellbeing of the economy. Essential workers should have access to greater opportunities in housing, education and healthcare equal to the proportion of risk (e.g., measured by death, dismemberment, chronic disease, shortened lifespan, etc.) that they endure for the sake of “our” economic system.
5. **Nurture economies of solidarity and resilience.** Vulnerable communities have long created economies that leverage local assets in historically rooted, culturally appropriate and mutually supportive ways. It is critical that these supportive networks are nurtured as they provide critical structures of resilience and resistance to communities that are marginalized in the current food system.
6. **Land based. People based.** Our resilience is rooted in land and the capacities of people in our communities.
7. **We Elevate and Amplify (Essential) Worker Voices.** None are liberated until all are liberated. We recognize every human being has the ability to work towards liberation and become self-sufficient by creating necessary systems. In a liberated society every voice is lifted and every one of us is visible and our contributions are recognized.

The complicity of the land grant college complex

Colorado State University (CSU) Extension’s recent presentation of preliminary findings from the 2020 Colorado Agricultural Labor Survey for Employers raises concerns about the role that CSU’s College of Agricultural Sciences and Extension Division continues to play in the Colorado agricultural industry. Specifically, we are concerned that the research being produced and published is intended to and has the effect of maintaining long standing power imbalances in the agricultural sector in favor of industry profits over sustainability, resilience, and ethics. We have challenged the data presented and revealed the harms that flow from the dissemination of this research. All too often, researchers shy away from engaging agricultural laborers because they believe this population to be too difficult to reach. This perception only serves to confirm the degree to which

many members of the agricultural workforce are marginalized and socially isolated from other stakeholders in the food system and in civil society.

At the time the CSU study was conducted, the Project Protect Promotora Network (PPPN) was already active. Had the researchers wanted to connect with workers, the PPPN would have happily facilitated access and assisted with survey design, translation, and dissemination to worker communities in our four Colorado workforce regions.

The Promotora Network was created to support food chain workers in Colorado fields, produce packing houses, meatpacking plants, and other industries where these essential workers are more likely to be mistreated as expendable. This is true all the time but even more so under pandemic conditions.

The main focus of this model is to train and provide resources for a group of promotoras across the state who are knowledgeable in legal, health and food-based issues that confront food systems workers in response to COVID-19. Promotoras will support and work in tandem with Regional Labor and Employment Specialists. Promotoras live in the geographic region where they work and have connections to the farm/food worker communities therein. Promotoras are working in collaboration with agencies and members of the community to bring community voice to inform and influence decisions that impact their lives. Promotoras provide community education around health, legal guidance, and available resources including personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies. Promotoras provide support for community members who are experiencing additional vulnerabilities related to COVID-19. Promotoras provide support for community members who are Colorado residents as well as community members who are not residents but who are employed in the state or are required to remain by public health officials to remain in Colorado as a result of COVID-19 exposure.

SB-087: The Colorado Farm Worker Bill of Rights

Beyond the work we have carried out on the promotoras network, Project Protect has also been involved in developing support for Colorado legislation related to farm workers: SB21-087, Agricultural Workers' Rights, was passed by the legislature on June 17, 2021 and signed by the Governor one week later. This is a progressive bill and will, upon implementation, require that agriculture employers must:

- Provide basic health and safety protections during the pandemic
- Extend the right to organize for collective bargaining and self-defense to farmworkers
- Ensure that service providers like doctors have access to farmworkers on employer-provided housing
- Ensure fair pay of at least the minimum wage and overtime based on rules enacted by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment
- Mandate rest breaks and other protections against overwork, especially in extreme heat
- Provide powerful protections against retaliation for farmworkers who speak out about mistreatment.

As good as this sounds, during the rule-making phase to implement the law (January-February 2022) we found the law being weakened and even undermined as a result of the pressures placed on state agencies by large corporate agricultural interests. A particular casualty of this rule-making process were the overtime regulations developed by the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE). The overtime rules are unreasonable and end up exempting many growers from full compliance with the law. The proposed rules fail to adequately protect agricultural workers. There were some minor adjustments to weekly hours before overtime and positively, the small farm exemption was removed after 2025. Although there is now an exemption for dairy/feedlot managers, there is not a larger one we had feared may come. Regardless, the rule is still far from acceptable and nowhere near the equal treatment of overtime pay after 40 hours per week and 12 hours per day, which most other workers in Colorado enjoy. Due to the slow phase in, workers will not be able to truly benefit from even the minimal protections until 2025. Furthermore, the “highly seasonal” exception protects big agricultural businesses at the expense of worker health and welfare.

Final theoretical Reflections on Biopolitics in Pandemic Times

...does terrorism have to work only through death? Can't one terrorize without killing? And does killing necessarily mean putting to death? Isn't it also 'letting die'? Can't 'letting die', 'not wanting to know that one is letting others die' — hundreds of millions of human beings, from hunger,

AIDS, lack of medical treatment, and so on — also be part of a more or less conscious and deliberate terrorist strategy? (Derrida, 2003, 108).

The most insidious form of biopolitics, after genocide and targeted political violence, is what Derrida terms “letting die the other.” The banality of this form of structural violence has been rendered more visible during the current pandemic. There are endless instances of denial of medical treatment or a failure to provide personnel protective equipment (PPE) to agricultural and other food chain workers.

Biopolitics, however, are not limited to the actions of the neoliberal state of exception and instead also involve resistance and struggle by those who have been targeted for elimination or expulsion by the biopower regime. What we have learned from our colleagues in the fields and communities is that there is a great capacity for resilience and mutual aid. As one promotora explained during a meeting of Project Protect staff: “We have always lived under dangerous conditions. We have always been mistreated and denied care. We have always remained on the margins, hidden, disposable. But this has taught us how to survive by working together and providing for ourselves. The pandemic did not cause us to panic. Instead, it brought forth our best traditions of cooperation and mutual aid.”

The theoretical tendency in biopolitics discourses is to focus on domination and marginalization. We find this lacking. Every act of resistance by our communities and workers also involves the exercise of biopower, but one that converts this into acts of life-affirming solidarity and collective action.

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Conjunto Sounds in a Company Town: Decolonizing Movidas, San Antonio’s Quarrytown, and “La Piedrera” Polka

Alejandro Wolbert Pérez

It seemed to me that the remembrance of human activities at certain locations vested them with a kind of sacredness that could not have been obtained otherwise. Gradually I began to understand a distinction in the sacredness of places. Some sites were sacred in themselves, others had been cherished by generations of people and were now part of their history and, as such, revered by them and part of their very being.

Vine Deloria, Jr. *God Is Red*

The Texas Mexican conjunto remains one of the most prominent and enduring forms of Xicanx cultural expression. Conjunto first emerged in the Texas Mexican borderlands along with norteño, its northern Mexican analogue, a century ago; today, the genre’s reach has spread beyond its regional origins, following factory workers and agricultural laborers north, throughout the Midwest, and along the west coast—as well as overseas, with prominent artists hailing from Japan and the Netherlands. The accordion and bajo sexto combination at the core of the modern conjunto ensemble became standardized with the advent of mass-produced recordings, played via commercial radio or purchased for listening at home, during the later years of the Great Depression through the rapid onset of performative and stylistic innovations that arose in the wake of World War II.¹ With its roots in the working-class Chicana and Chicano experience, conjunto musicians, dancers, and other participants create and share

¹ For more about the general history of the Texas Mexican conjunto and Tejano, I suggest starting with Manuel Peña’s *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working Class Music* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985). Two other introductions to the genre, its history, and social significance are Juan Tejeda and Avelardo Valdez’s edited volume, *¡Puro Conjunto!: An Album in Words and Pictures: Writings, Posters, and Photographs from the Tejano Conjunto Festival en San Antonio, 1982—1998* (Austin: UT Austin Press, 2001) and Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr.’s *Tejano Proud: Tex-Mex Music in the Twentieth Century* (College Station, TX: A&M University Press, 2002).

epistemologies of the self, or ways of knowing, through creative forms of bodily performances—dance—and musical expression, and between different venues or sites such as ballrooms, dancehalls, cantinas², or even kitchens and living rooms. Taken as a whole, these aspects of cultural production in movement across dance, music, and venues embody Xicanx history, thought, and knowledge.

My work on the Texas Mexican conjunto draws upon ethnographic and archival research, including the always-unfinished project of conducting oral histories and interviews with the genre’s listeners, musicians, and dancers primarily in and around San Antonio, Texas. As importantly, I wish to highlight the conversations I shared with my grandmother Dora; her wisdom, experiential knowledge, and, above all, love continues to guide my thinking and theorizing around this music genre which brought her so much joy. Through an analysis of conjunto dance, music, and performance venues, I address Xicanx identity, cultural memory, and decolonial movidas, or struggles, across time and space. That is, who are we as a people? How are we shaped and how do we shape our histories? And how do we restore and reclaim our humanity through five centuries of colonialization, as guests as well as upon our Native lands? As Karleen Pendelton Jiménez reminded us during the 2021 NACCS opening plenary, we are still in colonial times, and as such we must wrestle with the question of decolonization of land, of space, of knowledge.

I write this essay for publication about two years after epidemiologists and researchers first detected the COVID-19 virus, following social distancing, sheltering-in-place, and other preventative health measures throughout wave after wave; where Black and Latinx communities are disproportionately affected; and where we as a whole have yet to truly grasp the immediate, let alone long-term, societal costs and changes resulting from this moment as we approach the loss of a million lives, officially, in what is presently the United States due to this pandemic. It is in this context that I think about that most social and communal of activities, dancing—specifically, conjunto dance—as well as the social spaces and

² For more on the theorizing of spatiotemporality, or space and time, in the working class cantina, and its relationship to Xicanx (Tejanx) cultural poetics, please see Deborah R. Vargas’s wonderful essay, “Punk’s Afterlife in Cantina Time” (*Social Text* 1 September 2013; 31 (3 (116)): 57–73. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2152837>). While Vargas focuses upon San Antonio-based punk bands (Girl in a Coma, Piñata Protest) more so than conjunto, her depiction of cantina time bears noting, if only to acknowledge the influence it has had upon my own thinking in revising this essay.

performance venues where musicians and listeners congregate, communicate, and celebrate with one another. I situate these at-times daily acts of love within larger conversations around Xicanx identity, cultural memory, and decolonial movidas (Sandoval, 2000), or acts of resistance, across time and space.

Much like how oral histories are dynamic repositories of familial, communal, and cultural knowledge that change as they are shared and passed along, where each storyteller adopts and adds their own nuances, flourishes, and revisions, conjunto dance is likewise an archive of experiential knowledge documented and expressed through bodily movement. These knowledges, and knowledge practices, reside in the body, communicated through dance via quotidian forms of social intimacy like gestures and touch.³ Hand touching hand; a gentle nudge turns a partner clockwise; a light press on the hip reunites the pair or splits them apart, stepping side-by-side to the polka ranchera played onstage. The practice and performance of conjunto music maintains multi-generational knowledges and experiences, collapsed under but not contained by the modifier of ‘traditional,’ as in the motto of San Antonio’s [Conjunto Heritage Taller](#), “Música Tradicional for youth of all ages.” One way of reading this meaning of tradition finds it situated as a floating signifier that suggests the preservation of historical continuity, as well as a hewing to practices of the past, or even a sense of authenticity—purity—that is now missing: puro conjunto, conjunto puro. But what conjunto, and when? In terms of instrumentation alone, we can point to the many post-War innovations, or the use of electrical amplification, to say nothing of the earlier shift from the one- to two- to three-row diatonic accordion.⁴

Rather than contain conjunto in this way, as an artifact of one time—the past—now rendered inauthentic, I wish to offer a contrapuntal interpretation, in the spirit of Edward Said’s insistence that we consider acts of imperialism and

³ Here I am in conversation with Juana María Rodríguez’ *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings* (NYU Press, 2014), in particular Chapter 3, “Gesture in Mambo Time,” in order to theorize around touch and gesture in conjunto dance.

⁴ Without belaboring this point, I think it’s worth noting the variation and experimentation that took place in instrumentation prior to the post-WWII wave of innovations, specifically through just accordion modifications. While the earliest (recorded) conjunto artists used both treble and bass buttons—that is, they played both sides of the accordion—as the bajo sexto and, later, tololoche (or upright bass), and simple drum set provided percussion and rhythm, many performers removed the block of reeds on the bass side, or simply did not play on the left side entirely. So doing further distinguished the sound and style of the Texas Mexican conjunto. However, of the ardent ‘traditionalists’ continuing to perform today, Santiago Jiménez, Jr. can be heard playing bass as often as not; how we think of or imagine the sound of ‘authentic’ conjunto, as interpreted today, reflects the porousness and fluidity of the music at the time of its performance.

resistance in our efforts to find meaning in the text (*Culture and Imperialism*, 1994: 66). However, for our purposes, in place of imperialism I identify coloniality, and place it in context as part of the project of modernity: the coloniality of time and space; the coloniality of thought and knowledge; the coloniality of race, class, and gender (for examples, see Lugones, 2007; Quijano, 2000; Alcoff, 2007; Mignolo, 2011, 2012). Conjunto practice and performance maintains multi-generational knowledges and experiences, while resisting the hegemonic demands placed upon brown bodies by late capitalism. In Sunday afternoon dances or communal-based lessons at the Taller, conjunto's actors—dancers, participants—move in time to the rhythms of a cumbia or polka ranchera, in movement against the regulation of time; like other social dances, conjunto dance defies the demands of capitalism and the Fordian ideologies that reduce bodies to units of profit and production. Dancers move forward with each step, collectively rotating in a counterclockwise, cyclical movement on the dance floor; in place of a straight line, and a beginning, middle, and ending point, the dancers return and return and return: to one another, if in pairs, and together around the floor, claiming and making space for the pleasure and community.

As a form of popular music, conjunto songs defy dominant notions of immediacy. In place of the continual 'new' and 'better', as tied to the project of modernity and the myth of progress, conjunto listeners enjoy and continue to enjoy songs first written decades prior.⁵ This continual enjoyment does not take the place of an appreciation for new compositions, nor in conjunto do we encounter any sort of temporal distinction indicating a song's age. That is to say, in contrast to "the oldies," or "cruisin' classics," monikers indicating a body of R&B and soul songs dating back to or in the style of midcentury music from largely Black and Brown musicians, conjunto music bears no such equivalent—no a priori designation signaling that a particular composition dates back several generations. In fact, during my fieldwork I only encountered the term "old school" in reference to style and dress, to describe the appearance of a performer or dancer, never about a particular dance step or song. These reinterpretations along with original recordings stand alongside new compositions; played back-to-back on the same set or during an extended popurri, where an artist will blaze through portions of two, three, or more songs in succession, with nary a break. Immediately, I think of The Hometown Boys or Los Dos Gilbertos, closing down

⁵ This cultural practice is not limited to conjunto listenership, as attested to by our love of the oldies.

the Tejano Conjunto Festival, of tracks appearing on CDs from Ruben Vela (“Popurri de Exitos,” “Popurri en Concierto,” “Power Polka Popurri,” 1996) and Tony de la Rosa (“Popurri,” 1996), still in rotation years after the artists passed away; to say nothing of compositions from seven decades prior: “Atotonilco;” “Sube y Baja;” “La Barranca;” “La Piedrera.” (I will return to “La Piedrera,” the song, shortly, in a discussion around La Piedrera, the place.) Rather than collapsing moments-through-music, conjunto’s constant reimagination of the old with the new is expansive; an opening and point of entry—a portal, a cenote—for building community; a place of returning, through memory; and a claiming and making of space, through song and dance. This occurs daily, at home, where partners and loved ones might listen to records or streaming tracks; during special occasions, such as reunions, festivals, or outdoor celebrations featuring one or several bands, sometimes spanning a weekend or longer; and above all in the working-class dancehalls, ballrooms, and cantinas or corner bars that form part of the social fabric of Xicanx communities wherever they are found. These sites of conjunto performance and enjoyment are catalysts of creative synergy; they facilitate the transmission and sharing of bodily practices and knowledges; and as physical locations are shaped by the factors and forces of the urban city—in this case San Antonio—with the echoes of Jim Crow segregation still encountered today in patterns of residential segregation and educational access, development and displacement.

Far from being ahistorical, or of compressing linear time into a singular moment, I argue that conjunto challenges the teleological construct of modernity’s linear progression of time, through the genre’s continual enjoyment of musical compositions and dance styles drawn from across its history. Through the claiming of space and the creative making of communal forms of pleasure across dance and music, conjunto dancehalls, nightclubs, and other performative spaces function as living archives, shared repositories of a peoples’ knowledges, made and remade nightly, and preserved through the song and dance that still exists even long after the physical sites are demolished. I return now to “La Piedrera,” the song, and La Piedrera, the place: San Antonio’s Quarrytown, or Cementville, a company town owned by the San Antonio Portland Cement Company that existed over a century ago, located where now sits San Antonio’s Sunken Garden Theater and Alamo Quarry Market. Nicknamed “the Quarry,” this mixed-use retail center opened in 1998. Anchored by a high-end grocery store and for the time state-of-the-art movie theater, the Quarry Market’s most distinctive

feature are its smokestacks, almost all that remains of the factory and its surroundings. These now-iconic smokestacks feature prominently in the Quarry's marketing and branding: the capitol letter Q, shaded as if to resemble a waning crescent moon, surrounds three of the smokestacks in silhouette.

It was here where Santiago and Virginia Jiménez, lived, worked, and raised a family, including their two sons, Flaco and Santiago Jiménez, Jr. Six years older than him, Virginia outlived the elder Santiago by another fourteen and a half years. She passed away in 2009, about two months shy of her 103rd birthday (“Virginia Jimenez,” 2009). I recognize and name her here to rectify my previous



omissions of her presence and role in supporting and shaping one of the genre's most prominent and enduring dynasties. Santiago Sr., Flaco, and Santiago, Jr. are all legendary conjunto musicians. While they have

Alamo Quarry Market, with its iconic smokestacks. Photo by author.

received critical acclaim and academic recognition, in the process Virginia has been marginalized or erased from the genealogies and narratives around conjunto's emergence, development, and continual endurance. What tales might she have told, had someone thought to inquire? How do we uncover the silences, and recover her stories?

Conjunto is more than the music of a male-dominated group of performers. By including the voices of the audience members—dancers—as well

as those from kin- and familial- relationships, research into conjunto can expand our scope of analysis, and give us new insights into the genre and beyond. Rather than constructing a patrilineal timeline of individual accomplishments and innovations, placing conjunto within a larger social context enables us to examine how it serves to generate and sustain community.

Santiago, Jr. recalled his father and Patricio Jiménez, his grandfather, working in the quarry, and playing conjunto music.

Yeah, they used to have my grandfather say [to] my neighbor, ‘Say, you know what? We’re going to have a party here’ or ‘we’re going to enjoy here in the summertime’. They would play [conjunto] outside in the dirt. They use to wet it to make it kind of hard, so people get [covered] in la polvadera [dust], and if it rained, they would get all the furniture out from the living room and put them on their back ... so people could dance inside, en las casas (Jiménez, 2012).

As Santiago recounted, his grandfather

would start playing at seven o'clock till seven o'clock in the morning or six. They would—amanecer—the whole night, enjoying the main band. And then the following week they, they would go to my, I would go to your house. And then next time you go to my house, we do it there. So then we rotate around the neighborhood (Jiménez, 2012).

While their labor, and the land upon which they lived, belonged to the company town, through these creative acts of cultural expression families and workers and families of the workers at the San Antonio Portland Cement Company made and created spaces for socialization and the pursuit of pleasure, through movement and music, before the advent of conjunto dance halls and performance venues following the second world war.

In 1942, Don Santiago Jimenez, Sr. y Sus Valedores recorded his song “[La Piedrera](#),” the quarry, naming the space and place where these working-class Mexican Americans, Blacks, and whites lived, worked, and loved. A lovely polkita ranchera, the track features Jiménez, Sr. on his two row Hohner accordion, joined by Lorenzo Caballero on guitar and Ismael Gonzáles on the tololoche, or upright string bass. Par for the course at the time, there are no vocals. (Valerio



Advertisement for San Antonio Portland Cement Company, from the San Antonio Express News, January 29, 1930. “1930s ad for Alamo Cement shows views of ex-quarry,” by Julie Domel, 13 August 2015. San Antonio Express News, <https://blog.mysanantonio.com/vault/2015/08/1930s-ad-for-alamo-cement-shows-views-of-ex-quarry/>

Longoria is credited with introducing singing to the genre, following World War II.) Must the textual, through lyrics, take precedence to determine or debate meaning? What of an instrumental titled after someplace? La Piedrera carries the name and history of what was—a community built around the extractive labor of limestone extraction, and the dances held in their living rooms or under the stars, where the elder Jiménez and his conjunto began to shape and form the contours of the genre.

Conjunto nightclubs and other venues first began to appear within a decade following the end of World War II. Among those hosting live musicians were Lerma’s, the longest continually running conjunto

niteclub, and La Gloria, a filling station-slash-grocery store, with an open air, rooftop patio. With the rise of a sustainable performance economy the weekly Quarrytown dances ceased, as Jiménez, Sr. and his conjunto joined others whose names we remember and whose names we now have forgotten, to play on stages throughout San Antonio, across South Texas, and in the cities, towns, and rural communities called home by Mexican Americans who worked in the factories and farms that dotted the landscape of what is presently the United States. Conjunto was on its way to becoming an industry as much as a culturally-rooted practice, and the conjunto dance hall was a key component to insuring, for a time, the

livelihood of working musicians and a space where dancers, fans and the Mexican American working class would spend their leisure time and disposable income.

Eventually, the Portland Cement Company ended their local operations, and La Piedrera, Quarrytown, Cementville, shut down. The Jiménez familia moved north along I-35, to Dallas, for a brief spell before returning back to San Antonio. “La Piedrera” endures.

Flaco and Santiago, Jr. both recorded their own versions of “La Piedrera,” the song, along with countless other artists. A search of the Strachwitz Frontera Collection turns up 29 versions alone, including several variants recorded by all three Jiménez men, solo or in conjunction with one another. (At least two of the tracks, “La Piedrera Parte 1 and Parte 2,” by Luis Hernández y Leonardo Sifuentes, are recordings of corridos. The remaining 27 all appear to be an interpretation of Don Santiago Jiménez, Sr.’s composition.) “La Piedrera” is one of the first pieces students learn at the Conjunto Heritage Taller, in San Antonio; while valued for its simplicity among beginners, the hands of seasoned accordionists add their own embellishments to it, innovating and improvising in their own style.

“La Piedrera,” the composition, names and identifies La Piedrera, the location. Conjunto’s participants and performers defy modernity’s insistence upon an erasure of the past that breaks with history, and the individualist edicts of late capitalism and the neoliberal state. Conjunto musicians and conjunto dancers are living archives and repositories of knowledges; they embody our peoples’ histories and experiences. These are decolonial movidas in every sense, set in motion to the sounds of an accordion, making and claiming space with each and every note; each and every step an act of creation, of forging community.

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PART THREE: Creative Hope, Creative Healing, in our House of Time

Chiconahui calli xihuitl:
Año nueve casa
(al modo nahua)

Que la casa del tiempo
nos abrigue los sueños,
inspire flor y canto,
nos cobije en plumas,
nos de beber en vasos de oro,
nos enrede el corazón
en sartas de piedras verdes.
Que sea hogar de nuestra alegría,
consuelo de nuestra pena.

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Chiconahui Calli Xihuitl:
Year Nine House
(in the nahua mode)

May the house of time
Shelter our dreams,
inspire flower & song,
wrap us with feathers,
give us drink from gold cups,
twine our hearts
in strings of green stones.
May it be home to our joy,
comfort of our grief.

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The Street Belongs to Us: Chicana/o/x Studies for Kids (y Niñas de Corazón)

Karleen Pendleton Jiménez

In 2021, I published the middle grade novel *The Street Belongs to Us* (Arsenal Pulp Press), bringing together, among other influences, learning from my grandmothers' stories, my Chicana/o/x Studies degree, my tomboy/trans childhood, and Canadian and Indigenous perspectives of the land. The following is an excerpt from the novel where the 12-year-old protagonist Alex asks her "Nana" (her grandmother) about the Chicano Movement.

"What's a Chicano movement?" I ask.

"Oh!" she gasps. "I forgot to tell you about the Chicano Movement? That's terrible. I'm forgetting too many things, mjia."

"Don't worry, Nana." I reach to hold her hand. "I remember most of your stories, so that means we've got them safe in both of our heads."

She smiles. "You're a good kid."

I get embarrassed when grown-ups compliment me, so I change the subject as fast as possible. "What about the Chicano Movement, Nana?"

"Oh yeah." She takes a sip of her tea, turns down the volume on the TV, and begins. "Mira, way back in the 1840s, when the gringos stole a bunch of México, they made a whole lot of promises to us. They said we would keep our liberty and property rights. But they didn't follow their own rules."

"Like how?"

"You know Dodger Stadium, right?"

"Yeah, of course," I answer. "I love Dodger Stadium."

"Well, that used to be Chavez Ravine, which was stolen from Mexican Americans." She shakes her head sadly. "Your grandpa was so mad about that he resigned from his job with the city."

“Wow,” I say. “I didn’t know that.”

“And Rosemead is full of Mexican kids, but how much Spanish have you learned at your school so far?” she asks.

“None, Nana,” I admit. “I’ve only learned a few words from you.”

“We had a right to our language, but they don’t give us the chance to learn it.” She sounds angry now.

“That’s true.” I feel sheepish. I wish I knew Spanish better so my nana wouldn’t have to be so upset.

“Bueno,” she resumes, “we started getting really mad that the gringos weren’t keeping their promises. And also that they could be really mean to us, saying racist words and even beating us up sometimes, kicking us out of school, not paying us enough money at work, deporting us, a thousand kinds of awful things.”

I lower my head. I feel kind of ashamed of the stories she’s telling. Even though I’m part Mexican, I’m also quite a bit American. It’s like one part of my body was mean to the other.

She sees my head down and says, “Don’t worry, mija, we’re just getting to the good stuff.”

“There’s good stuff?” I ask.

“About twenty years ago, a whole bunch of Mexican Americans started fighting back, marching on the streets, striking in the fields, and demanding better schools and jobs and all the rights we deserve. Some of the ones who were fighting for justice even wore uniforms and called themselves the Brown Berets. In East LA they put together free health clinics for Chicanos, and one of the leaders, Gloria Arellanes, graduated from El Monte High.”

“Did anyone from Rosemead ever do anything?”

“Pues, sí.” My nana nods proudly. “Vikki Carr, the smoothest Chicana voice on the radio. She’s ours.” (109-111)

Memory

“I am Indian and so I don’t forget,” my grandmother used to tell me. Other times she would say she was maybe German (she was not; she was hoping such a claim might protect her against racism). Mostly she would tell me she was Mexican, from Chihuahua, a child who fled with her mother away from the

Mexican Revolution. As her dementia increased in her old age, she forgot almost everything of the day; but she remembered, with increasing clarity, a lifetime.

It might have been the last time I saw my grandmother when I told her, “Don’t worry, Nana...I remember most of your stories, so that means we’ve got them safe in both of our heads” (Pendleton Jiménez 109). Writing *The Street Belongs to Us* was a way for me to fulfill my promise to her. I have not forgotten her nor the many stories she told me about Mexico, immigration to the United States, Chicana culture, romance, tragedy, cooking, cunning, survival, shopping, racism, beauty. Before I made it to college, she had provided me, through her memories, an enriched Chicana/o/x Studies curricula.

Memory is on trial these days. Her stories stand in contrast to news of parents protesting “critical race theory,.” which they understand as any material that addresses racism(Kilgore). In Texas, where racism against Mexican Americans is a significant part of the state’s past and present (Perez), “suburban parents have attacked school boards and districts for teaching about sexuality and racial discrimination” having been “emboldened by one of the nation’s most far-reaching anti-critical race theory laws passed...in May” (Zelinski). Parents such as these do not want children to know how racism has hurt people, neither today nor historically. They are protesting against memory. They want the right to exclude certain memories in favour of others. U.S. racism against Chicana/o/xs is one of the excluded memories.

On the other hand, California recently passed a law requiring all high school students to take an ethnic studies course (Fensterwald). There is also a statewide K-12 Ethnic Studies curriculum (Asmelash) and a required course for California State University students. Nearly two centuries of excluding Chicana/o/x studies from schooling has erased neither Chicana/o/x knowledge nor the hunger to learn about it. The public has demanded that Ethnic Studies, including Chicana/o/x Studies be part of the education system.

I am particularly moved by the inclusion of Chicana/o/x Studies in California curricula as California is where I was born and raised. However, during my entire K-12 schooling, I was never provided a text written by or about Chicana/o/xs. The entirety of our Chicana/o/x studies curriculum consisted of a once-a-year Cinco de Mayo school party, with snacks and dancing. During the festivities, there was no lesson helping me to understand the historical relationship of the holiday with the Chicano Movement (Hayes-Bautista), or even that a Chicano Movement had existed. To add insult to injury, my trans/tomboy self

was forced into a little white dress to dance with another boy from my class in a little white suit on the black top playground with the other kid dancers, under the Southern California sun; we performed in front of the rest of the students at the school. Schools are a colonial tool that have been used to publicly perpetuate the stories of the conquerors, rendering invisible the knowledge and histories of the conquered (Wilinsky). Before I entered university, my learning of Chicana/o/x history came from my community, family, and my grandmother in particular. My ability to write *The Street Belongs to Us* in the 21st century speaks to the resilience of my grandmother's oral storytelling in preserving colonized histories and cultures despite school curricula.

In 1998 I moved from my California homeland to Toronto, Ontario, Canada. While Chicana/o/x Studies does not exist in Canada, I find that there are important connections between Chicana/o/x peoples and Indigenous peoples in Canada. Chicana/o/xs do not share the same history of colonization as Indigenous peoples in Canada, but there are similarities of Indigenous and mixed-race ancestry, multiple and overlapping European and North American colonizations, marginalization in schools (including abuse and destruction of language and culture), and movements of resistance. Learning about Indigenous peoples in Canada and relationships with land and each other often reinforces my understandings, and/or offers me new ways to look at Chicana/o/x Studies. *The Street Belongs to Us* tells a 1984 Los Angeles story of a mixed-race Chicana/o/x family, yet its focus on land is influenced by Indigenous teachings in Canada (Bell). While the kids do not develop a sense of stewardship of the land, they do develop a loving relationship and are guided by Alex's grandmother's advice that they both take pleasure in, and respect, the earth.

Here it is critical to note another, related kind of memory that surfaced subsequent to my book's publication. After many decades of Indigenous oral stories recounting the hidden deaths and murders of Indigenous children at Canadian boarding schools, bodies are being found. The recent discovery of hundreds of children's bodies in unmarked graves beside former residential schools in Canada shows that burying evidence will not silence memory (Dickson & Watson). It might take a while, but it will be unearthed. Canada faces its time of reckoning. History does not disappear from the land, and we have a responsibility to listen to oral story tellers and to dig.

Digging

The first idea I had for my book *The Street Belongs to Us* was to return to the summer they tore up my childhood street, Muscatel Avenue in Rosemead, California. With the cars unable to drive on our street, I remember the powerful and miraculous feeling of having the street belong to us kids for one summer. In addition, while I did not yet have a plot, I had faith that stories could emerge from all that digging around in the dirt. With the concrete and asphalt broken up and shipped away, a seal was broken. Deep inside their trench adventure, the tween characters could explore family, gender identity, mental health, racism, classism, sexism, and ableism. In addition, Nana, Alex's (the protagonist's) grandmother, takes the opportunity to share seventy years of cultural memory.

Rosemead, California is a little city inside the San Gabriel Valley. It is a region where forgetting is a pastime. In *Pasadena Before the Roses: Race, Identity, and Land Use in Southern California, 1771-1890*, Yvette Saavedra argues that Anglo American stories in this area have displaced “the history of Tongva Indians, Spanish missionaries and colonists, and Californios (Mexican Rancheros) that came before the roses” (3). Rosemead is also a neighbor of San Gabriel, where Cherríe Moraga documents a similar hierarchy and erasure of the cultures and peoples of her hometown in her memoir *Native Country of the Heart*,

The Native origins of the region had long been absorbed, close to extinction, into the culture of landless “Mexicans” who now resided on the other side of the tracks of Anglo America, in the shadow of ever-expanding freeway interchanges. (43)

My home on Muscatel Avenue was in earshot of the freeway and far south of the train tracks. My Rosemead education did not mention Indigenous, nor Mexican history, instead opting for the tale of a German horse-breeder who made a fortune through his horses housed at his Rosemead Stock farm, which became the city of Rosemead (Harness Racing Museum). While I did not know the concealed stories of the land where I resided as a kid, my grandmother had shared enough of her own for me to want to find out more. In addition, the overt racist remarks against “Mexicans” in Rosemead that I heard growing up fueled a rage in me to fight. I took Chicana/o/x Studies the first chance I got when I began college at Berkeley.

In the fall of 1990, I was lying on my bed in co-op housing doing my Chicano history homework. I turned a page in Rodolfo Acuña's *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* and found my grandfather:

Actions of the neo-robber barons became so outlandish that DeWitt McCann, an aide to Mayor Poulson's Urban Renewal Committee, resigned, stating, "I don't want to be responsible for taking one man's private property through the use of eminent domain and giving it over to another private individual for his private gain." (297)

In my Chicano history course, I learned that celebrated places like Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles were created through the destruction of Chicana/o/x neighborhoods and the theft of their homes. I learned that in every era there have been people like DeWitt McCann (my grandfather) who knew to do the right thing and challenge colonialism ("urban renewal"). I learned that it was possible for white men like him to act in solidarity with Chicana/o/xs. I learned that my family, and the land where I grew up, were intimately connected to Chicana/o/x Studies. I wanted to know more and I wanted to become an educator who would locate and provide the complex and multilayered cultures and histories of a given landscape. Whether the digging was literally into the land, or metaphorically within libraries, archives, and the internet, I would strive to take seriously this responsibility in my classroom.

Chicana/o/x Pedagogies

Nana, Alex's grandmother in *The Street Belongs to Us*, brings forth a combination of the stories I learned from my own grandmother and from my formal Chicana/o/x Studies education that began in college and has continued through my participation in the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social, and my own reading and scholarship. Through Nana's stories and sensibilities, she models Garcia & Delgado Bernal's discussion of complicated, intergenerational teaching through "pedagogies of the home." With her humour, warmth, and loving relationship with the protagonist, Nana also embodies Alexandra Arraíz-Matute's notion of "pedagogy of cariño."

In the disrupted earth of Muscatel Avenue, the characters express complex cultural identities constructed through centuries of relationships, "competing

visions,” and “dynamic continuities” with the land (Saavedra 4). There are hateful bullies who claim ownership through their taunts; there is the mixed-race protagonist coming to terms with a body that is both complicit with, and victim of, colonization; there is the grandmother who recounts her own immigration to California, as well as the rights of Chicana/o/xs to live in peace on this land. The character of Nana resists the erasure of non-White inhabitants of the region, explaining to her grandchild that Rosemead is the traditional land of the Tongva people, where Chicana/o/xs and Anglo-Americans have settled.

In addition, linear time falls aside in the novel. The characters ostensibly exist in the 1980s, a decade when North America experienced a shift from more liberal politics to conservative values and economics; when civil rights movements were displaced by Reaganomics; when *One Day at a Time* was replaced with *Family Ties*. It is a rapid “motion-change” that L. Heidenreich urges us to recognize. In order to survive and contribute to a more just world, Heidenreich explains that “it is critical that we learn from the past and utilize both old and new to carve out spaces of resistance” (xxx). This type of blurring and flexibility of time is how the novel moves. There are no clear divisions between the grandmother’s stories of the Mexican Revolution (the caves where she hid as a young girl to escape the battles between the Federales and Pancho Villa’s army), the Los Angeles streets where Chicana/o/xs marched to fight against racism, and her own trans/nonbinary/tomboy grandchild who she celebrates standing proudly before her. Binaries of time, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are thrown out and replaced with transhistorical stories of pleasure, relationships, politics, heartbreak, and survival. I offer *The Streets Belong to Us* as one answer to Heidenreich’s “callout to the Mexican and Chicanx dream of a Sixth Sun ... [that includes] transgender Mestiz@s” (xxx).

Conclusion: The Aspirations of Autofantasías

In her article, “Contested Children’s Literature: Que(e)ries into Chicana and Central American Autofantasías,” Isabel Millán discusses the role that children’s literature plays in their education, often “meant to inculcate certain truths onto children” (199). Millán creates the term *autofantasia* to identify children’s books that have the potential to challenge “us to think outside of traditional or child-normative standards for children’s literature” (219). She describes *autofantasías* as “autobiographical information [that merges] with alternative realities, or fantasies” (219). As she explains, “I propose *autofantasia*

as a literary technique whereby authors deliberately insert themselves within a text in order to fantasize solutions or responses to hegemonic structures” (202).

In *The Street Belongs to Us*, I fantasize healing to personal and communal wounds. I bring my grandmother to live with me in a home where I had faced isolation. Her stories serve as entertainment, adventure, puzzles, and teachings for the protagonist. I also show the protagonist overpower the neighborhood bullies and express their fury against the bullies’ racism, transphobia, and ablism. I give the protagonist’s best friend the words to help them embrace their gender diverse body and eradicate gender binaries. I provide the twelve-year-old protagonist the chance to confront her father and ask him to step up in his responsibility to her as a parent. It is my hope that these stories “critique the injustices around them by guiding readers toward counterhegemonic futurities” (219-220), that *The Street Belongs to Us* will join the Millán list of Latinx autofantasías, and that children will enjoy the adventure of the novel as they develop critical consciousness.

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Apá

Rita Urquijo-Ruiz

As a young man, Apá taught himself to play the classical guitar. He could also make his requinto (a smaller one) cry with melodious, crisp notes. My siblings and I thought that Amá had married him for his musical talents. In 1979, we were a family of thirteen living in Hermosillo, the capital of the Sonora Desert, in northwestern Mexico. I was the third youngest and one of my dad's favorites... his consentida, which translated as "beloved or spoiled" depending on who was judging. On Sunday afternoons, he would sit us down to enjoy the music from his two guitars. Since he was not a good singer and couldn't remember lyrics too well, he usually invited me to sing while he played. I would oblige, con gusto, because I felt very special to have him entrust me with this important and fun task. My memory, as it relates to lyrics, was excellent, and I would not disappoint him as he played song after song and I sang each one from beginning to end. "Gema," a beautiful bolero, was our favorite and we knew that Amá loved it too, so we would dedicate it to her often. "Eres la gema que Dios convirtiera en mujer, para bien de mi vida..."

When my parents got married, Mamá Lola, our paternal grandmother, gave them the last two adobe rooms at one end of her shotgun house and planted a tall garden between them for privacy. With a third-grade education, Apá was a self-taught mason, a maestro de obras, and he could design and build anything from a simple house to a three-story mansion. But somehow, he only managed to build three walls attached to the front of our casita. He never finished the addition that was supposed to be a large room for his eleven children. The two original adobe rooms were multi-purpose: one was a kitchen by day and my parents' "bedroom" by night and the other functioned as a bed, living, sewing and TV room all at once.

Apá was 5 feet 8 inches tall; slender but with strong, with defined muscles; light complexioned, with permanent rosy cheeks and jet black, short hair combed back. His receding hairline exposed a big forehead, but he always wore a cowboy hat when he was not at home. His eyes were small and looked as if he had just done a travesura; they were smiling eyes shaded by scattered, thin eyebrows. His nose matched the rest of his face perfectly; not too big, not too small. His clothing was of that of the traditional vaquero and my favorite part of his outfit was the press-button cowboy shirts with two picos on each side of his chest and one on the top, center of his back. I remember a light, pistachio green shirt in particular and wondered how it would look on my own butch body someday. Apá could grow a full beard, but never did. Instead, his whole life, he wore a trimmed thick mustache that highlighted his full lips. He used to shave every morning by putting his double-edge blade into his old fashion, metal razor; screw it on and then submerge it into a container with soapy water that smelled minty clean. When he arrived home from work, sometimes I would help him take off his steel-toe boots and he would give me a coin and a kiss. His prickly beard tickled my cheek and I liked feeling him close. My family was not affectionate; so Apá's beso was the only sweet gesture I received on any given day.

I loved him because he was an ideal, loving father to my siblings and me. But I despised him because as an alcoholic, he became a violent, unrecognizable version of himself every weekend. There were brutal, verbal and physical fights between my parents. Amá no se dejaba, she would hit him back and throw whatever she could at him. One time she almost got him in the face with a kitchen knife. Later, I learned that she would usually be the one to start the fights. In spite of their mutual beatings, Apá somehow managed to never lay an angry hand on any of us, bukis—his children. Amá, on the other hand, was often ready to discipline us with la chancla, her hand, a belt, or even garden hose. As a buki malcriada, I was terrified of physical violence so I behaved well... I was the only one who was never hit by my Amá.

My parents' fights were on Friday nights and sometimes on Saturday. Inevitably, the same violent scene would start whenever Apá got home drunk and had little or no money for our family because he would choose to spend his entire "raya" with his borracho friends. Chaos would ensue and the yelling, screaming, punching, pulling of hair and clothes would last for what seemed like an eternity. And somehow, regardless, my parents would end up sleeping together on the kitchen floor, like any other night. By Sunday morning, estaban como si nada and

learned to love domingos. They were fun because by then our family had managed to get through the violent spells and glue our scattered pieces back together. We would also get our “domingo” or a tiny allowance.

Sunday mornings began with the same ritual. My mom would turn on the radio and get ready to wash up her “rincones,” (her word for her intimate body parts). We did not have our own running water or a bathroom; instead, we shared both with our maternal grandmother. After pouring some warm water into a bandeja, Amá would go behind the kitchen door. I could hear the water splashing and her singing to the radio as if she were the happiest woman alive. Afterwards she would come out from behind the door, fix her dress and make her strong, black coffee. No sugar, no milk added. Smiling and lightly flirting with my Apá, she would hand him the first cup and then pour one for herself. He would drink it with a piece of pan dulce. As they prepared for the day, the two of them would purposely bump into each other around our small kitchen. They would exchange sweet miradas and smiles. Once ready, Apá would say to us kids: “ay nos vemos, raza” and he would take off by himself to go walk in the cerros around our city. His trips lasted two or three hours. He would return with tunas, pitayas or other desert fruits.

When I was seven years old, Apá started to complain about his throat hurting. Later, he began getting skin tags around the front of his neck. The bolitas started to grow and to bunch up like little grapes. Amá wanted him to go see a doctor, but he was too proud. Instead, when his health started deteriorating, he would only cover his neck with a bandana like a bandit at rest. He wouldn't allow anyone to see behind it. But one time I saw his neck by accident and it already looked like putrid over-sized blackberry. Apá's health got worse by the day and after going to sobadoras y curanderas he finally had to go see a doctor who diagnosed him with a cancerous tumor. By then, the cancer had already spread throughout his throat, mouth, and shoulders and he had a few months to live.

The night he died, I was waiting outside our casita with my brothers and sisters who were sitting on broken chairs and benches we made from lumber he would use in his construction jobs. We knew this was it. He had been agonizing for a week and something told us he couldn't hang on anymore. A curandera said there would be a sign; he would try to clear his throat and if he succeeded, he would swallow the cancer, expel it from his body, and survive; but if he didn't, that would be his last action.

As one of the youngest, I wasn't allowed in the bedroom, but the door was open and I peeked in. He was laying there, thinner than usual, his cheeks no longer rosy, his lips dried and cracked, his hair messed up and his face covered with stubble. This wasn't my Apá; I didn't know this man. Scared, I went back to join my siblings. Shortly after, we heard a loud attempt at him clearing his throat, followed by a short silence, and then my mom's loud "NOOOOOO, no me dejes sola... no te me vayas, viejo..." Her high-pitched wailing was piercing, so I ran as fast as I could to my grandma's cuartito de baño in the middle of our shared back yard.

I went in, stood on in the middle of the roofless room, looked up at the stars and thanked God for my finally taking the monster away: "gracias Dios mío por llevártelo..." But as soon as those words escaped me, I became terrified. Would I be divinely punished for my sin of wishing my father dead? That night, the monster was gone... but so was my loving protector.

Salvation on 24th Street
January 10, 1982¹

Cathy Arellano

“You should turn back now,” Angel told me. That was hours ago. We said we were waiting for a 14 to take her home, but when the bus came we said, “Next one.”

I didn’t feel the cold and I didn’t hear the men’s “Oye, mijas” when we passed Hunt’s Donuts Open 25 Hours with my arm around Angel. I’d walked on Mission to and from 24th Street so many times before, but that evening the sky had the richest pinks, oranges, and purples mixing with the blue. The palm trees looked perfect standing in the small patches of dirt surrounded by the red and blue bricks of the Mission Miracle Mile. Two weeks ago, the Niners beat the Cowboys in the NFC game. It was a whole new world.

At 24th and Mission, home of the 49ers faithful and Giants diehards, site of The First International Cruise Night, there were more people in the nearby mural than on the street. The viejos on the corner had carried off their card table and bottles of secret waters. The Cristiano strapped his Mr. Microphone to his back after he gave out his last flyer. Horace Mann Middle School and St. Peter’s kids had bought paletas then chased each other home hours ago. The Asian woman who was selling the hammer and sickle newspaper—the one that no one in my family ever bought—packed up when the sun first started setting.

I felt like I was on a movie set. It was so quiet and empty. Just Angel and me. With my arm around her. It was cold and we were trying to keep warm, I told myself as I prayed we could stay in that spot for the rest of my life. Mom was

¹ Originally published in *Salvation on Mission Street*, Korima Press, 2016.

probably home from work wondering where I was. Or, she was having a Seven-7 at the Crossroads and not thinking about me. Either way, I wasn't leaving Angel.

"Jesus loves you."

Angel and I let go of each other and looked around. The tall, slender woman with light brown hair and light eyes reminded me of that well-meaning 4th grade teacher who told me I wasn't like the others.

"Jesus loves you," the woman told us smiling and holding a Bible.

Angel smiled back at the woman. I maddogged her.

"Yes, he loves you," she said looking back and forth at us. My wannabe maddogging didn't make her stop.

Angel and I looked at each other then back at the woman. We giggled.

"Haven't you ever heard that?" she asked.

The adults only went to church for the occasional baptism, communion, or wedding. While us kids were at Mission Dolores on Saturdays for catechism classes and Sundays for 49ers. When we came home, there was a game on and we learned the basics of each sport while we traded empties for cold ones. Most of the priests at MD were like our uncles and talked about what we did wrong not about Jesus loving us.

"He loved you so much, He died for you," the lady said. "Won't you love Him back and accept Him into your hearts?"

Angel didn't go to church. Her mama lit candles, broke eggs, and left glasses of water around. Her mama bought weed and soaked it in alcohol to cure Angel and her little brothers and sisters when they were sick.

"I wish my Mom would rub weed on me," I told Angel when she first shared her secret with me.

Angel stepped closer to the woman. If I were with Estrella, Gloria, Ana, or even Andrea, we would've just walked away from that loca with the Bible and fired up.

The lady remained between me and Angel. She told us stories about Jesus, some that sounded vaguely familiar and others I just knew she was making up. After she talked to us for half the night, she looked at Angel on her left and me on her right.

"Won't you accept the Lord?"

I wondered to myself, *Am I still buzzed?* Angel looked at me then at the lady.

"I accept the Lord," she said.

I wasn't buzzed. I was with Angel.

There on 24th standing next to Angel and hearing that lady talk my Jesus, the beautiful blonde-haired blue-eyed Joe Montana, appeared to me.

The lady turned my way, "Do *you* take the Lord Jesus Christ to be *your* savior?"

I looked past the lady and directly at Angel just as two weeks earlier Montana must have locked eyes with Freddie Solomon, Lenvil Elliott, Earl Cooper, and Dwight Clark before each pass or hand off.

The lady stepped closer to me, "Say it. Say, 'I accept the Lord Jesus Christ to be my savior.'"

The streetlight hit Angel as she peered at me with glossy eyes matching her lips as she gripped her books in front of her breasts. Maybe it was the Olde English from earlier. Maybe it's the weed from the day before. All I know is I heard

"Do you--"

I became Dwight Clark rolling into the end zone, turning inside, and stopping between those two defenders. I saw Joe being chased to the right then throwing. I broke for the outside. Then there was only one guy on me.

"Do...you...take..."

I leaped into the air as high as I could. I extended my arms, hands.

"Do you take Angel to be your lawfully wedded wife?"

"I do," I said. And I meant it so help me God. My fingers clutched that ball as if it were my life. I leaned over and kissed Angel. Right there in the Center of the Universe, Angel kissed me back.

The crowd cheered. It was a madhouse.

Korean Vet Shot in Bar Argument¹

Cathy Arellano

A veteran of Army service
 on Nana's mantel
 between the dipping bird
 and Auntie Ellie's graduation portrait
 above the oval mirror
 that eight by ten of him
 with sweet lashes
 dark honey skin
 inside beige uniform and cap
 bullet-black eyes and sure smile
 don't reveal a single horror

in Korea
 a million miles away
 with thousands of other boys
 he survived the Cold War alone

was shot and killed
 husband
 of his third wife
 son
 who defended his mother
 from his father's blows
 father of three
 who cuddled his youngest daughter
 in burgundy quilt war souvenir
 brother
 who asked his four sisters

¹ Originally published in *Salvation on Mission Street*, Korima Press, 2016.

after their break-ups
if they were *sure*
she didn't want him to *talk*
to that asshole

uncle
who tickled nieces
to steal back blanket

last night
second night of new year
second homicide of 1971

in a Mission
District bar
he grabbed kid brother
home on leave
pushed him down the stairs
out of their parents' flat
led him away from
their mother's "Stop running, yous kids!"
the kids' "She hit me!"
his brothers' "Tackle!"
for a game of pool
coupla beers
an hour of peace
three blocks away

after an argument
over the war in Vietnam
the war
any war
a bar stool
song on the jukebox

Sonny Martinez,
28
twenty-fucken-eight

was pronounced dead
no more smoking that smoke
no more getting lost

in Jimi's psychedelic riffs

at Mission Emergency Hospital
after the shooting
in the De Lux Bar
at 18th and Valencia Streets.

Valencia to Guerrero
Guerrero to Dolores
Dolores to Church

Police Sgt. Ed Epsting said
witnesses reported
the argument but were
unclear which side Martinez had
taken in the dispute.

this side, that side
right side, wrong side

Martinez was shot in the chest
with a .32 caliber pistol.

“Mama, Mama” as his head knocked
on wooden bar before slipping
between two stools
“stay with me, man”
brother cooed to brother

Epsting said a description
supplied by witnesses led to
J---- T-----, who lived
nearby and was found in
another tavern
in the neighborhood.
T----- was booked on
suspicion of murder charges.

the blood that spilled onto floorboards
soaked through earth
dropped into Our Lady of Sorrows waters
joined five hundred years
of blood flowing beneath Mission Dolores

we have been attacked
in body and soul
we have been denied justice
and pushed out
but we will always
be connected
to this land
these waters

MÁS-cara

Rita Urquijo-Ruiz

Sentada frente al espejo
me transformo:
desprendo milímetro a milímetro
mi máscara de fuerte
mi máscara de valiente
mi máscara sonriente.
Empezando por la frente, la doblo
hacia abajo entre mis diez dedos;
se van desprendiendo
las dos cejas,
los párpados cerrados,
el tabique de la nariz, la punta,
la mejilla derecha, y a mitad de ésta,
la izquierda,
mi labio superior,
seguido por el otro
para terminar con la barbilla.
Quedan debajo:
una mueca triste;
mi cara: bistec crudo, palpitante.
Cualquier viento aterciopelado
al menor contacto,
podría tajarla dejando escapar
un hilito de líquido viscoso,
rosado, rojizo, rojo.
Pero con cada rasguño llega una cicatriz
y de costra en costra
formará otra cara
que aunque nueva,
aprenderá a ser fuerte,
a expresar una sonrisa arraigada,
profunda, verdadera.
Quedaré sin máscara,
quedaré con más cara.

MASKS

In front of the mirror
I'm transforming:
I slowly peel away
My mask of strength
My mask of courage
My smiling mask.
Starting with my forehead, I fold it
downwards between my ten fingers
My two eyebrows,
My closed eyelids,
The bridge of my nose, the tip,
My right cheek, and half way,
my left one,
My top lip,
Followed by the bottom one
are pulled away.
Underneath:
A sad smirk,
my face: raw, throbbing flesh
The softest wind
With its velvety touch
May cut into it, exposing
a thin thread of viscous liquid
pinkish, reddish, red.
Each scratch, a new scar,
and scab by scab
a new face
Learning to be strong,
With a deeply rooted,
Smile.
Without a mask,
My new face,
My new soul.

Contributors

Ana M. Ardón is a researcher at the National Latino Research Center and a Lecturer in the Liberal Studies Department at CSUSM. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a Master of Arts in Sociological Practice from California State University San Marcos. Her areas of research interests include applied sociology, qualitative methodology, Latino Critical Race Theory, popular education, Latino/a civic engagement, border studies, and the Honduran diaspora.

Cathy Arellano is just another Chicana writer from San Francisco's Mission District. The broken-hearted lesbian love poems in Arellano's *I Love My Women, Sometimes They Love Me* are suitable for anyone who's ever loved, been loved, or been left. *Salvation on Mission Street* is Arellano's family memoir in poems and stories set in SF from the 1960s to the 2000s. Both books are published by Kórima Press. Arellano won the Golden Crown Literary Society's Debut Author Award. Arellano has shared her work in person with audiences in bars, cultural centers, marches and protests, K-12, community college, and four-year schools, and other sites in various communities. Currently, Arellano serves as English Coordinator for the PUENTE Program and teaches in the English Department at American River College located in the far northeastern corner of The Mission called Sacramento. You may reach her at carellanopoet@gmail.com to invite her to your community.

Fatuma Emmad is the CO-Founder, Executive Director and Head Farmer of Front Line Farming. She is an affiliate professor at Regis University and lecturer in the Masters for Environment Graduate Program at CU Boulder. She is also the owner and operator of Bountiful By Design, a sustainable high-end landscape company. Before becoming a farmer, Fatuma was a political scientist who engaged in issues affecting marginalized farming communities such as the push for genetically modified seeds across Sub-Saharan Africa. She believes in resistance by the world's land caretakers to single solutions for crop productivity and seeks to work on re-framing ideas of food security. She currently serves as a Mayor appointed Member of the Sustainable Food Council for the City of Denver, a co-chair for the City's Good Food Purchasing Policy Group, is a fellow at Transformational Leaders for Change promoting leaders of color in Colorado, is a 2020 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Fellow for 2020 and was elected president of Mile High Farmers in 2020.

Ricardo Favela is the Public Relations Liaison for the National Latino Research Center and directs the communications strategies and efforts. Ricardo is also an alumnus of California State University San Marcos and was born and raised in North San Diego County to a migrant agricultural worker family. Having been involved in community social movements since his youth, Ricardo has a lifelong trajectory of struggle and is currently a first year serving Trustee for the Fallbrook Union Elementary School District making him the first Chicano and person of color to serve.

Rafael Jesús González, born in El Paso, Texas/Juárez, Chihuahua, attended the University of Texas El Paso, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, & the University of Oregon. Professor Emeritus of Creative Writing & Literature, he taught at several colleges and universities, including Laney College, Oakland (where he founded the Mexican and Latin American Studies Dept.) He was Poet in Residence at the Oakland Museum of California and the Oakland Public Library under the Poets & Writers “Writers on Site” award in 1996. He served as contributing editor for The Montserrat Review and received the Annual Dragonfly Press Award for Literary Achievement in 2002 & 2012. In 2013 he received the César E. Chávez Lifetime Award. The City of Berkeley honored him with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015 and was named the City of Berkeley's first Poet Laureate in 2017.

Rafael J. Hernández is Associate Professor of Human Development at California State University San Marcos. He has collaborated with the National Latino Research Center and Universidad Popular as a researcher and community educator in the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program since 2018. His areas of scholarly interest include community cultural wealth, critical pedagogy, racial microaggressions, racial battle fatigue, and racial/ethnic/cultural identity.

Mario Millan Beltran serves as the Assistant Coordinator for the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program. After becoming involved with the NLRC through a service-learning course, he became more invested in mentoring young adults on how to fulfill their greatest potential. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from California State University San Marcos in 2020, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in Psychological Science.

Monica Muro graduated from California State University San Marcos in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies. She is a community educator for the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program. She assists youth with assignments

and helps facilitate youth activity workshops. Areas of scholarly interest include helping students of all abilities and backgrounds achieve goals.

Arcela Nuñez-Alvarez is a Chicana immigrant who came from Mexico to the United States with her mom and five sisters in the early 1980s. She is a *maestra del pueblo* (community educator), activist and cultural ambassador. With a group of community educators, she co-founded Universidad Popular, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting precious ancestral knowledge and empowering ordinary people to own our voice and use our power to shape our community.

Ben V. Olguín is the Robert and Lisa Erickson Presidential Chair in English, and the Director of the Global Latinidades Project, in the English Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Olguín's research and teaching are integrated into community service and civic engagement activities across a range of initiatives. These include service-learning projects in community centers and schools in underserved communities, as well as prisons, juvenile jails, and immigrant detention centers. He also is a member of the Venceremos Brigade, a civilian organization that promotes people-to-people diplomacy through volunteer education and labor activities in Cuba. In addition to articles published in *Cultural Critique*, *American Literary History*, *Aztlán*, *Frontiers*, *Biography*, *MELUS*, and *Nepantla*, Olguín is the author of *La Pinta: Chicana/o History, Culture, and Politics* (University of Texas Press, 2010), and of *Latina/os and WWII: Mobility, Agency, and Ideology* (University of Texas Press, 2014).

Devon Peña has served as Full Professor of American Ethnic Studies and Anthropology at the University of Washington since 1999, where he directed the Ph.D. Program in Environmental Anthropology for six years. He previously taught at Colorado College (1984-98). Peña is a biodynamic farmer, seed saver, plant breeder, and philanthropist. He is Founder and President of The Acequia Institute (TAI), a Colorado-based non-profit charitable foundation dedicated to supporting the environmental and food justice movements. A prolific author, his most recent book is the co-edited volume, *Mexican-Origin Foods, Foodways, and Social Movements: Decolonial Perspectives* (University of Arkansas Press, 2017), which received the "Best Edited Volume for 2018" Prize from the Association for the Study of Food and Society and was deemed "Essential Reading" by the American Library Association.

Karleen Pendleton Jiménez is a writer and professor in education and gender and social justice at Trent University. She is the author of *How to Get a Girl Pregnant*, and *Are You a Boy or a Girl?* both Lambda Literary finalists. Her award-winning film *Tomboy* has been screened around the world. A former NACCS Chair, she continues to be active in the organization. Her latest work, *The Street Belongs to US* is a middle-grade novel that explores intersections of gender diversity, Chicana history, and land.

Alejandro Wolbert Pérez is a guest upon unceded Muewekma Ohlone land, where he teaches Ethnic Studies and Xicanx/Latinx Studies at Berkeley City College, and coordinates the Faculty Diversity Internship Program for the Peralta Community College District. He is a 2020-2021 Mellon/ACLS Community College Faculty Fellow, and a recipient of an Ivor Guest Research Grant from the Society for Dance Research, in support of his study of conjunto dance, music, and performance venues.

Jessica Ramírez obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Literature and Writing Studies from California State University of San Marcos in 2019 and is a former Research Assistant with the National Latino Research Center (NLRC) where she conducted Census 2020 Outreach & Education, community-based participatory action research, and served as a community educator for the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program and various initiatives at the center. Jessica's interest in research was developed at the NLRC and she views research as a mechanism for highlighting the lived experiences of Latino community members to obtain resources and advocate for meaningful change.

Rosalva Romero graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychological Science from California State University San Marcos in 2020. She is a research assistant at the National Latino Research Center where she conducts community-based research by providing services and resources to the Latinx community. Her research interests include examining the lives of transborder families and how social, political, and financial encounters impact their livelihood while exploring the complexities of living between two worlds.

Angelica Santiago is the Program Coordinator for the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program. She is responsible for overseeing the program development, planning, implementation, and collaborating with community partners. She obtained her double Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, and Criminology and Justice Studies from California State University San Marcos in 2016. She is an advocate for youth and their families to have the right to a proper education.

Gemma Serrano is an undergraduate student at California State University San Marcos obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, with an emphasis on family and children, and American Indian studies. She is a research assistant at the National Latino Research Center where she assists in conducting community-based research, data collection, and provides resources to local Latinx community members. She is an advocate for child sexual abuse survivors and co-founder of Cultivando San Diego Community Gardens, a volunteer-run mutual aid focused on the installation of community gardens in low-income communities that promote food sovereignty, growth of culturally relevant foods, and the exchange of traditional knowledge. Research areas of interest include community healing and resistance through abolitionist and decolonial methods.

Cindy Torres, a first-generation Latinx and Mexican student, is currently enrolled at Vista High School in Vista, California. She will be the first in her family to graduate high school in 2024 and is inspired to continue her education to become a Nurse. She has been involved in the Homie UP Youth Empowerment program since 2018 as a student leader.

Rita Elena Urquijo-Ruiz is a Mexicana/Chicana queer educator, translator, writer, poet, activist, and performer born in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico and raised in southern California. As a child of the Mexico/US borderlands, her approach to teaching and writing is interdisciplinary and her work centers the stories of socially and economically marginalized communities. She is the first member of her extended family to receive a college degree and in 2019, she became the first Latina faculty member to go through the ranks and become a full professor at Trinity University, San Antonio, TX. She has performed as “La Chata-Rita,” her *peladita* character at local and national venues. She is the author of *Wild Tongues: Transnational Mexican Popular Culture* (University of Texas: Chicana Matters, 2012). Her non-fiction story “First Visit,” about being undocumented as an undergrad student, is forthcoming in June 2022, in the anthology: *Somewhere We are Human: Authentic Voices on Migration, Survival, and New Beginnings* (ed. Reyna Grande and Sonia Guiñansaca).