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## 50 Years of Activist Scholarship Selected Proceedings of the 2022 Meeting of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies

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# **50 Years of Activist Scholarship**

Selected Proceedings of the 2022 Meeting of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies

Edited by L. Heidenreich, Eddy Francisco Alvarez Jr., Jennifer Mata, and Isabel Millán

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## Deep Roots, Rich Legacies: Honoring Fifty Years of Scholar-Activism

L Heidenreich

In April of 2022, the words of our Chair, Roberto D. Hernández called us together to “remember, recall, honor, and embrace—warts and all—the may respective elders and scholars of [our] particular geographies... whose efforts over the past 50 year have allowed each of [our] campuses to have space from which [we] do the work that matters.”<sup>1</sup> And so we gathered, to remember and recall, and to do the work. We engaged multiple opportunities to reflect on the deep roots of our interdiscipline, and to celebrate the critical ways in which the field continues to evolve and diversify, while striving to create a more just society, and to open the doors of the university to new generations of Chicana/x scholars. We strove, as we continue to strive, to build on a rich legacy, where 1972 stands out as a critical watershed, emerging amid what we now know as the Chicano Movement.

Our founding was made possible by, and helped to fuel, one of several revolutionary movements of the late twentieth century. By 1972 when, at the Annual Meeting of Southwestern Social Scientists, Chicano scholars came together to share their research and to strategize on how they might develop and engage what was not yet a field, Chicana/o/x activism and Chicana/o/x print culture flourished.<sup>2</sup> The journal *Aztlán* was founded two years prior; Jaime Sena-Rivera, the first chair of the National Association of Chicano Social Scientists (NACSS), had published refereed work in the premier volume of the journal.<sup>3</sup> *El*

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<sup>1</sup> Roberto D. Hernández, “Dear Colegas,” *50 Years of Activist Scholarship, NACCS Annual Conference Program, April 20-23, 2022*.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Soldatenko, *Chicano Studies: The Genesis of a Discipline* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 2009), 58; Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas, 2011), 146; “History of NACCS,” <https://www.nacss.org/nacss/History.asp>, accessed August 8, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Jaime Rivera Sena, “Chicanos: Culture, Community, Role-Problems of Evidence, and a Proposition of Norms Towards Establishing Evidence,” *Aztlán* 1, no. 1 (1970): 37–51.

*Grito* was founded by Octavio Román five years prior to that first meeting, embracing the overlap of the Chicano movement with other revolutionary movements of the time.<sup>4</sup> Other movement publications included *Con Safos* (1968), *Regeneración* (1970), *Encuentro Feminil* (1973), *De Colores* (1973), *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* (1973), and *Bilingual Review* (1974).<sup>5</sup> While publications such as *El Grito* and *Aztlán* grew out of University settings, others such as *De Colores* were founded without university support and, instead, were produced by community collectives. In the words of José Armas, a member of the collective that produced *De Colores*, the goal of the work was “To harness ... intellectual ‘barrio gold’ for empowering our pueblo.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, *Encuentro Feminil* not only documented the political mobilization of Chicanas, it also “fostered new forms of Chicana political solidarity and participation.”<sup>7</sup> As noted by Maylei Blackwell, feminist publications such as *Encuentro* and *Regeneración* served as mechanisms for knowledge production and for action.<sup>8</sup>

In this rich context, NACSS, soon to rename itself the National Association for Chicano studies (NACS), flourished. In 1973, NACSS called a conference at New Mexico Highland University where 50 scholars gathered; the next year almost 100 scholars gathered to share scholarship, build the field, and organize. As noted by Michael Soldatenko, the early conferences, in conjunction with the Plan of Santa Barbara, set the tone for the emerging field. It was strongly influenced by internal colonial models and by materialist analysis, and like the much of the Chicano print culture of the time, it sought to “break down barriers between research and action.”<sup>9</sup>

This rich history, the history of our organization, is just one critical watershed in a long struggle. The seeds and roots of our interdiscipline, and of NACCS, run much deeper than that critical moment and those critical movements of the late twentieth century. In combing the footnotes of articles from the time, a

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<sup>4</sup> Mariana G. Martínez, “The First ‘Chicano’ Journal: *El Grito*, A Journal of Contemporary Mexican-American Thought,” *Diálogo* 20, no. 2 (2017): 47, 50.

<sup>5</sup> Soldatenko, 57; José Armas, “The Origins of Chicano Studies in the Southwest: *De Colores* Journal and Pajarito Publications,” *Diálogo* 20, no. 2 (2017): 97–105.

<sup>6</sup> José Armas, “The Origins of Chicano Studies in the Southwest: *De Colores* Journal and Pajarito Publications,” *Diálogo* 20, no. 2 (2017): 98.

<sup>7</sup> Blackwell, 146.

<sup>8</sup> Blackwell, 146-149.

<sup>9</sup> Soldatenko, 58-59.

historian, it cheered me to find a clear recognition of the scholarship that preceded the movement; the scholar-activists on whose shoulders we stand, often built, very consciously, on the generations of critical scholars who came before them. Jesús Chavarría's "Précis and Tentative Bibliography on Chicano History," published in volume 1 of *Aztlán*, for example included entries for Manuel Gamio's *Mexican Immigration to the United States* (Chicago, 1930), and Carlos E. Castañeda's *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas* (Austin, 1936).<sup>10</sup>

Legacies of knowledge production as a tool to challenge imperial violence emerged immediately following the U.S. Invasion, with the testimonios of Californios and Californianas, speaking out against the U.S. Invasion and the continued violence of its aftermath. Rosalía Vallejo de Leese, for example, insisted on speaking her testimonio of the Invasion in Spanish, explaining, "Those hated men inspired me with such a large dose of hate against their race, that though 28 years have elapsed since that time, I have not yet forgotten the insults they heaped upon me, and not being desirous of coming in contact with them, I have abstained from learning their language."<sup>11</sup> She spoke through "clenched teeth," yet she spoke and so her words of resistance, a counternarrative to Euro-American myths of the Invasion, carry on into the twenty-first century.

The early years of the twentieth century saw continued resistance and insistence on voice and action. George I. Sánchez, Jovita González, Ernesto Galarza, and Carey McWilliams addressed the struggles of our communities and called on scholars to treat Mexican American communities as subjects, not objects.<sup>12</sup> Laying the groundwork for the field to come, it is their scholarship that would appear in footnotes of so many movement scholar-activists. Galarza, in 1929, argued, "unless his economic contribution to the development of the western United States is recognized and rewarded, unless his needs and interests are considered from his point of view," the challenges faced by Mexican and

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<sup>10</sup> Jesús Chavarría, "'Précis and Tentative Bibliography on Chicano History,'" *Aztlán* 1, no. 1 (1970): 133-141.

<sup>11</sup> Rosalía Vallejo de Leese, "History of the Bear Party," MSS C-E 65:20, p.1, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

<sup>12</sup> Miroslava Chávez-García, "The Interdisciplinary Project of Chicana History: Looking Back, Moving Forward," *Pacific Historical Review* 82, no. 4 (2013): 544. <https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2013.82.4.542>.

Mexican American labor would not be met.<sup>13</sup> Though sparse, the scholarship in the years preceding and immediately after WWII made possible the work of the Chicano Movement generation – scholars influenced by the politics of their families and communities, and by the politics of the liberation movements of the 1960s and 70s—scholars such as those who came together in 1972 to found NACSS.

Yet, while the spirit of the Plan was alive at the founding conferences, so was the sexism of the time. Chicano studies often elided the voices of Chicanas. Cynthia Orozco, in the proceedings from our 1984 annual conference, noted these profound silences:

Rodolfo Acuña’ *Occupied America*... a work which should be considered the ‘Chicano Bible’ –epitomizes the lack of a conceptualization of gender. Acuña cogently describes racial and class oppression, but he does not mention gender oppression. In not doing so, he suggests a male ideology: sexism is not a problem.<sup>14</sup>

Orozco, and others pointed out that the male scholarship of the time, in addition to foundational documents such as el Plan de Santa Barbara, demonstrated a “lack of consciousness about sexism.” Thus, Chicanas developed and engaged multiple feminisms and challenged the silences within the emerging field and within NACS itself. Chicana feminism built on theory and activism rooted in Third World Feminisms and was also constitutive of it. At times it also built on nationalism, at times materialism. It was, as one feminist of that generation called all activists to be, “oppositional.”<sup>15</sup> Chicanas actively shaped the early years of the organization and the field – they researched Chicana history and Chicana

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<sup>13</sup> Ernest Galarza, “Life in the United States for Mexican People Out of the Experience of a Mexican,” In *Man of Fires: Selected Writings*, eds. Rodolfo Torres and Armando Ibarra (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2013), 31, first published in the *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* at the Fifty-Sixth Annual Session held in San Francisco, California, June 26-July 3, 1929 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1929), 404.

<sup>14</sup> Cynthia Orozco, “Sexism in Chicano Studies and the Community,” in *Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender*, ed. Teresa Córdova, et al. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico), 12-13.

<sup>15</sup> Chela Sandoval, “U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World,” *Genders* 10 (1991) 1-24.

experiences and published their work in *Aztlán* and *El Grito del Norte*, as well as *Encuentro Feminil*, and *Regeneración*.”<sup>16</sup> They founded scholar-activist organizations such as *Mujeres en Marcha*, and *Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc*.<sup>17</sup> And they pushed their colleagues to include a session devoted to “La Chicana,” at NACS’ third conference, held in 1975.

While Chicanas remained active in the movement and in NACS, Chicano studies institutions were slow to change. It was in the 1980s that NACS underwent structural shifts that acknowledged the voice of and struggles of Chicanas in the field. Historian Maylei Blackwell maps how,

At the eleventh annual NACS conference in Tempe, Arizona, in 1982, [women of *Mujeres en Marcha*] organized a panel to bring attention to gender inequality and create discussion about the struggle of Chicanas to be recognized as scholars within the organization and the field of Chicano Studies. Powerfully using consciousness-raising techniques, they generated three proposals for the next NACS conference: (1) a plenary on gender oppression; (2) child-care provisions; and (3) an anti-sexism session organized by men of the organization. While none of these changes was implemented at the 1983 NACS conference, the Chicana Caucus of NACS was formed that year, even though it was not formally incorporated into the organization until 1986.<sup>18</sup>

NACS continued to grow, diversify, and to flourish in the years that followed. It did so because of the activism of its membership and the insistence of its membership that it continue to grow and change: In 1984 the annual conference theme was *Voces de la Mujer*, it resulted in the publication of *Chicana Voices*, a rich publication with articles that remain relevant today.<sup>19</sup> In 1986 it held its first Chicana Plenary, in 1990 the Lesbian Caucus was founded, and in 1992 the Joto

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<sup>16</sup> Chávez-García, 546.

<sup>17</sup> Soldatenko, 59.

<sup>18</sup> Blackwell, 204. See also Alma García, “The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse, 1970-1980,” *Gender and Society* 3, no. 2 (1989): 233-234. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/189983>.

<sup>19</sup> Chávez-García, 549; See also Teresa Córdova et al., *Chicana Voices : Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender* (Austin: Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas, 1986).



Caucus established. In 1999 NACS changed its name to the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, formally reflecting the gendered reality of the field and of our scholarship.<sup>20</sup>

The development of the field was not/is not linear and is not contained by national borders. As Antonia Castañeda, Deena González, and Vicki Ruiz have noted elsewhere, Chicana scholars of the 1970s and 1980s were often hemispheric in their approach to the field.<sup>21</sup> This was, in part, due to the lack of Chicano faculty and Chicana programs as the first cohort began their work. Thus many of the first Chicana historians, such as Ana Macías, Luisa Año Nuevo Kerr, Rodolfo Acuña, Raquel Rubio Goldsmith, and Shirlene Soto were historians of Mexico and Latin America.<sup>22</sup> Adelaida R. Del Castillo's *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History* included work by Chicana historians and literary scholars whose work spanned the U.S. and Mexico.<sup>23</sup> This hemispheric approach to our work has not died, instead it made possible continued expansions, such as the work of Alejandro Ollin Prado, whose work you find in section two of this year's proceedings, connecting Chicana issues to those of the people in China. Our communities and our scholarship continue to be hemispheric and global.

Fifty years strong, the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies continues to grow and evolve; our field remains rooted both in word and in action. Our 2022 Annual Conference and, in relation, our 2022 Proceedings,

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<sup>20</sup> William Calvo-Quirós with Antonia Castañeda, "How did We Get Here? A Short Timeline... a Long Tradition," *News from Nepantla: UCSB Chicana and Chicano Studies Newsletter*, Fall 2012, <https://escholarship.org/content/qt3zb2t8k3/qt3zb2t8k3.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Antonia Castañeda, "Gender, Race, and Culture: Spanish Mexican Women in the Historiography of Frontier California," and "Que se Pudieran Defender," in Antonia Castañeda and L Heidenreich et al., *Three Decades of Engendering History: Selected Works of Antonia Castañeda* (Denton: University of North Texas, 2014). Deena González, Gonzalez, "Gender on the Borderlands: Re-Textualizing the Classics," *Frontiers* 24, no. 2/3 (2003): 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.1353/fro.2004.0012>.

<sup>22</sup> Author correspondence with Drs. Antonia Castañeda and Deena González. See also Mary Pardo, "Honoring and Remembering One of the First Chicana Historians: Shirlene Soto," *Noticias de NACCS*, December 2009, pp. 2, 15. [https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1044&context=noticias\\_naccs](https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1044&context=noticias_naccs).

<sup>23</sup> This included Rosaura Sánchez, Raquel Rubio Goldsmith, Emma Pérez and José Limón, among others. See Adelaida R. Del Castillo, ed. *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History* (Encino: Floricanto Press, 1990).

reflect this rich and layered heritage of struggle, resistance, and coalition. Section One of the volume focuses on legacies, with our Chair, Roberto D. Hernández, calling us together to honor this legacy “by recommitting ourselves and our work to be in the spirit of a transformative activism that continues to open spaces for all of our people... always growing collectively from and with new activist voices of those that have chosen to also walk in the path of what Reynaldo F. Macias calls *La Perspectiva Chicana*.” We follow his inspiring call with the plenary addresses of Drs. Luis Torres Alvarez and Rusty Barceló. These two historically grounded addresses place our work in a longer and larger context of our 50 years. Luis Torres maps the NACCS 1994 response to Colorado’s Amendment 2, which sought to codify GLB discrimination into the Colorado State Constitution. He addresses the critical difference that our amicus brief, made in the successful challenge to Amendment 2, while also marking the shortcomings of our struggles to confront inequality. Rusty Barceló’s address, from the Chicana Plenary, shifts our gaze to the struggles for Chicana and LGBTQ voice and equality in our organization itself, including the critical role that allies have played, and reminds us that new voices are “opening up new conversations in unexplored and new terrain.” She insists that we not walk away, but instead stay and work to make our organization more “cohesive and inclusive.” As we look forward to another 50 years of struggle, growth and knowledge production, the work of these scholars, and their legacies, remind us to do work that matters, *vale la pena*.

Section two of *50 Years* highlights the power of the political, and of utilizing *los relatos de vida* for survival, paths to *conocimiento*, and flourishing. Together, the four powerful papers address voice and agency, building on the legacies of Chicana scholar-activists such as Gloria E. Anzaldúa and the women of the Latina Feminist Group, as well as other WOC scholars such as bell hooks—all of whom taught us the power of speaking our truth. Amanda Tovar, in “Chisme Saves Lives: Chisme, and #MeToo as Storytelling Interventions in Sexual Violence,” engages the work of Gloria González-Lopez, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Josie Méndez-Negrete to demonstrate the power of *chisme* as *relatos de vida*, speaking her own story and mapping how speaking her story to family and friends freed them to also speak and heal. Gabriella V. Sanchez, Jesús Jaime-Díaz, and Josie Méndez-Negrete, in “Self/Other, Other/Self: *Conocimiento* as Pedagogical Practice,” bring us into the classroom. Like Tovar, they critically engage the work of Anzaldúa—in this case, to interrogate and share one method for using

teacher education classes as places of *conocimiento*. They argue that we can create spaces where future students “critically examine their respective legacies by sharing a living history” Margaret Cantú-Sánchez, in “Pandemic Pivoting within Academia and Activism,” joins the discussion of pedagogy and *conocimiento*, arguing that the Covid Pandemic was an *arrebato*, thus the work of Anzaldúa, and other scholar-activists such as Kendi, are now more critical than ever, as we seek to not only survive the *remolinos* of the twenty-first century but to change the world. As educators, she reminds us, changing our world means changing ourselves and aiding our students in similar processes. Last, in “Conceptualizing Academic *Putería*: A Critical Reflection on the WAPs, DAPs, and Flops,” Tess Pantoja Perez and Olga Alvina Estrada bring young and energetic voices to return our gaze to the university – insisting on the power of the erotic to survive and, perhaps flourish in academe, where we all “engage in academic *putería*” They argue: “Academic *putería* is derived from the labors of the mind, body, and spirit, which are commodified and mined for their wealth. From this perspective, we regard academic *putería* as a means of survival within an individualistic, merit-based, capitalistic, neoliberal institution.”

Our closing section brings us back to NACCS as an expanding field, rooted and growing in coalition. Elizabeth Barahona’s “The Campaign for Decent Housing: Black and Latino Coalition Building in Durham, North Carolina,” looks at how Black and Latinx community members came together and created resources for their communities in Durham. Because they understood the needs of their communities, they were able to succeed even when the media and/or police force was less than helpful. Her work provides critical insight into community organizing in sites beyond commonly studies spaces such as New York or Los Angeles. In relation, Alejandro Ollin Prado studied the emerging relationship between Chicanos in Oakland and the people of China. In “Toward a Transnational Chicanidad: New Tribalism, Environmental Justice, and China,” he maps the activism of mark! Lopez, using the words of Lopez to argue for the importance of a Chicanidad that is global and that builds global networks and coalitions for resistance and for creating new world. Our volume this year closes with the reflections of a former chair, Dr. Karleen Pendleton Jiménez, as they reflect on the veteranas who helped them envision themselves as a Chicana scholar-activist, and as they look forward to another fifty years of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies.

This year, in honor of our fiftieth anniversary, the pages that divide our chapters are graced with excerpts from *Perspectivas en Chicano Studies: Papers Presented at the Third Annual Meeting of the National Association of Chicano Social Science, 1975*. *Perspectivas* was the first time that NACSS, which would become NACCS, published its proceedings. In that volume, Reynaldo Flores Macías, the general editor, wrote:

The Association is still too young to tell whether it will have much impact on the intellectual work of Mexicanos. These Proceedings, however, promise a positive and hopeful beginning. The annual meeting of the NACSS is the only national gathering of Mexicano scholars dedicated to and focusing on the development of intellectual work for the benefit of our communities.... Let us continue to develop NACSS and other broad-based organizations that will allow us to do the work needed to liberate our peoples.<sup>24</sup>

As we look forward to the next 50 years, “Let us continue to develop [NACCS] and other broad-based organizations that will allow us to do the work needed to liberate our peoples.”



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Pullman, WA  
Summer 2022

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<sup>24</sup> Reynaldo Flores Macías, “*Perspectivas en Chicano Studies I: Papers Presented at the Third Annual Meeting of the National Association of Chicano Social Science, 1975*,” published by the National Association of Chicano Social Science, with the Chicano Studies Center, UCLA; the National Council of La Raza and; the Amauta-National Center for Chicano Studies Research. <https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/naccs/1975/>.

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## PART ONE: Building a National Scholar-Activist Organization

... The National Association of Chicano Social Science is one of the independent organizations that is still growing.

The Association is still too young to tell whether it will have much impact on the intellectual work of Mexicanos. These *Proceedings*, however, promise a positive and hopeful beginning. The annual meeting of NACSS is the only national gathering of Mexicano scholars dedicated to and focusing on the development of intellectual work for the benefit of our communities.

Let us continue to develop NACSS and other broad-based organizations that will allow us to do the work needed to liberate our peoples.

Reynaldo Flores Macías, 1975





Dear Colegas,

I want to welcome you to the 48th Annual conference of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the first ever gathering in 1972 in San Antonio that led to the creation of the National Caucus of Chicano Social Scientists (NCCSS), the first incarnation of what we now know as NACCS.

*Nehuatl nitlacuiloa huan niltse iukpa Mat Kumeyaay!* I write to you and bring you greetings from Kumeyaay Land. From the traditional territory of the Iipay-Tipay/Kumeyaay Nations that extend across the relatively recent man-made national-territorial boundaries of the entities currently referred to as the United States and Mexico. From present day Oceanside, California to Ensenada, Baja California, and from the Pacific Ocean to the Colorado River, these lands have nourished, healed, protected and embraced the Kumeyaay for time immemorial in a relationship of balance and harmony. As a faculty member in Chicana and Chicano Studies at San Diego State University we have long acknowledged this legacy and living present, and actively worked to build relations with the Kumeyaay, long before any officially sanctioned university land acknowledgement.

As an heir to *50 Years of Activist Scholarship* and of the legacy of the Toltecas en Aztlán and other community members of Logan Heights who were at the heart of creating Chicano Park, Chicana/o Studies and Centro Cultural de la Raza here in San Diego, we have long promoted and strived to maintain this balance and harmony with the land and with Kumeyaay relatives. As we acknowledge the rinconcito de tierra that we call our Tierra Sagrada, Parque Chicano, Aztlán, and our sacred home, El Centro Cultural de la Raza – La casa de tod@s – we maintain and uphold that this is first and foremost the land of the Kumeyaay, while simultaneously being the emplacement of an Aztlán arrived at through our living praxis. As such, Aztlán is not a territory on which we place any flag in the invented tradition of modern nation-states, but rather a place, a sacred geography we call home for on it Creator provides us with the nourishment for our seeds, and blesses us with the rain and sun to watch our crops grow, and from such harvests allow

us as a People to continue to survive and thrive despite a civilization of death that would like to see our extinction were it not for their dependence on our labor.

From this corner of a land that is known by many names, this year's theme of *50 Years of Activist Scholarship* serves as a reminder of all who pasaron por aqui. I am particularly reminded of the late Rene Nuñez, who would be among the first to make a call for that important and now historic gathering in Santa Barbara that laid the foundation for Chicana and Chicano Studies as we know it today. It was that activist impulse that he and others, such as our also recently departed Juan Gomez-Quiñonez and Gracia Molina de Pick, all of whom passed por aqui, through the halls of San Diego State University that I now call my home campus and through the gathering spaces in Santa Barbara in 1970, who helped galvanize a generation of young Chicanas and Chicanos to take up the challenge of producing knowledge in the service of our communities. Some have since made their journeys to Mictlan, others are still with us. Here in San Diego, we honor them and those with whose presence we are still blessed – among them Sonia Lopez, Enriqueta Chavez, Gus Segade, Pepe Villarino, Alurista and others – who helped plant those earliest of seeds and nurture them into the robust field that we have today. Fifty-two years later, as we gather for this also historic conference, and we begin a new fire, I welcome and invite each of you to also remember, recall, honor, and embrace – warts and all – the many respective elders and scholars of your particular geographies, or your particular home departments, whose efforts over the past 50 years have allowed each of your campuses to have a space from which you do the work that matters.

Let us gather and honor the activist energies without which there would be no Chicana and Chicano Studies. Pero ojo, this is not a call for melancholy, nostalgia, nor a blind romanticizing of an era bygone. Al contrario, we best honor *50 Years of Activist Scholarship* by recommitting ourselves and our work to be in the spirit of a transformative activism that continues to open spaces for all of our people, that continues to reflect on and learn the lessons from our own previous shortcomings, that continues to look and move forward, pa'lante siempre pa'lante, but not without remembering to be constantly vigilant for our own blindspots. Let us caminar preguntando, always open to continue learning and growing collectively from and with new activist voices of those that have chosen to also walk in the path of what Reynaldo F. Macias calls *La Perspectiva Chicana*. Let us leave behind any pretensions that we have all the answers, for what is transformative knowledge, if not knowledge that both seeks to transform our circumstances, while also remaining open to be transformed itself in the process. Let us not seek recognition or validation in others within an academic complex that is intricately tied to histories of colonization and domination, but instead let us instead authorize our damned selves to trust in the beauty and necessity of our work and our word, our flower and our canto, and indeed our power and our llanto!

Lastly, I wish to thank all who have worked on any and all aspects of making NACCS what it is today, especially over the past two years in the context of la pandemia. I want to thank NACCS members for entrusting me to serve as Chair, even if the circumstances of the last two years did not permit me to be the proactive Chair I had envisioned being. After this conference I will become Past-Chair for the coming year, yet will strive to be an active member of the board, before stepping down the following year. While the pandemic has proved challenging for us all in our teaching, research, and personal lives, it has also allowed for the time to reflect on our own inner workings, to sit with ourselves, our dreams, our aspirations, and the plethora of work that remains ahead. It is not an understatement to point out that the bulk of our work, and indeed the best of our discipline, is yet to come! A final prayer: let us have the serenity to know how to proceed with work que vale la pena, the patience to not give in to petty pleitos or be consumed by a predatory and extractive academia, and the wisdom to know the difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Roberto D. Hernández". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Roberto D. Hernández  
NACCS Chair, 2021-2022

## NACCS vs. Colorado's Anti-GLB Amendment 2, 1992-1996

### Opening Plenary Session: 50 Years of Activist Scholarship

Luis Torres, Ph.D.

The National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) 2022 Conference marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NACCS initiating its joining of the Education Amicus Brief in 1994 in the lawsuit to the United States Supreme Court against the passage of the anti-Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Amendment 2 in Colorado in November 1992. This article presents the national precursors to Amendment 2 in Colorado, including some of the major groups promoting such amendments and propositions. I discuss the history of Amendment 2 (aka “Romer v. Evans”) in Colorado, approved by the voters in November 1992, stayed by an injunction in January 1993, overturned by the Colorado Supreme Court in 1994, and found unconstitutional, based on the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, by the United States Supreme Court in 1996. I discuss the involvement by NACCS as an *Amicus* filer in the Education Amicus Brief, the NACCS boycott of Colorado and its aftermath, and examples of the current situation of the GLBTQIA+ community in Colorado.

Colorado's “No Protected Status for Sexual Orientation” amendment was on the Colorado November 3, 1992 ballot (Colorado 1992 ballot measures) with the single notation, “Prohibits laws banning discrimination of sexual orientation,” a double negative enshrining legalized prejudicial treatment. It was an “initiated constitutional amendment” (Encyclopedia of American Politics). Amendment 2 sought to codify in the Colorado State Constitution the right to discriminate against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals (the terms used in the campaign, or GLB) including in such areas as employment and housing, with severe impacts also on

education from K-12 through college. The amendment was approved by a vote of 53.41% “Yes” votes and 46.59 % “No” votes.

Before Amendment 2 was passed by voters, anti-discrimination protections for GLB communities based on sexual orientation had been adopted in Denver, Boulder, and Aspen. For example, in the mountain town of Aspen, Municipal Code § 13-98 (1977) prohibited “discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations on the basis of sexual orientation” (Romer v. Evans, U.S. Supreme Court, page 626). Also, Colorado Executive Order No. D0035 (December 10, 1990) prohibited employment discrimination for “all state employees, classified and exempt” on the basis of sexual orientation. Additionally, Colorado Insurance Code, § 10-3-1104, 4A C. R. S. (1992 Supp.) forbade “health insurance providers from determining insurability and premiums based on an applicant's, a beneficiary's, or an insured's sexual orientation.” Two state colleges prohibited such discrimination. Metropolitan State College of Denver (now University) prohibited college sponsored social clubs from discriminating in membership on the basis of sexual orientation, and Colorado State University had an antidiscrimination policy encompassing sexual orientation.

From the perspective of NACCS, these two higher education institutions, among the few entities in Colorado at that time with some protection for the GLB community, represented one of the dangers Amendment 2 raised for the future of this community in Colorado education: Discrimination would have been allowed, and even encouraged, by the State Constitution against the GLB community, without such members having legal recourse. One of the major purposes and effects of Amendment 2 was to negate and even reverse anti-discrimination protections from the three city policies (Aspen, Boulder, and Denver) and from the other Colorado entities, including MSCD (now MSU Denver) and CSU Fort Collins.

Of special concern to NACCS, it became clear that the campaign in favor of Amendment 2 was largely successful in using racial and ethnic minorities against the GLB community, as if the Chicana/o community was one entity, and the GLB members were a different entity, segmented from each other, de-racialized and de-ethnicized. Such a stance purposely ignored that the GLB community is an inherent part of any civic society, including the Chicana/o and

African American communities, the two largest racial and ethnic minority groups in Colorado. An overt manifestation of the effectiveness of this strategy was the refusal by the Colorado Civil Rights Division to advocate for the GLB community. Seemingly counter to the purpose of the Civil Rights Division to protect the marginalized, its leaders supported Amendment 2.

During the trial over Amendment 2 in the Colorado Supreme Court, Thomas Duran, “supervisor for all regional offices of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission... supported Amendment 2 [and] told the court that laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation dilute ‘respect and resources available for enforcement of other civil rights laws.’” He testified that personal religious beliefs of Coloradans must be protected against infringements by sexual orientation anti-discrimination laws and agreed it would be “okay” to fire someone for being gay. In addition, former Chair of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission and supporter of Amendment 2, Ignacio Rodriguez, testified, “there is no empirical evidence that gays and lesbians experience discrimination as a group. In justifying his view, he also noted, ‘I don't consider the group a class. I consider it a special interest group.’ He stated including sexual orientation in civil rights laws would weaken and dilute those civil rights protections that had been earned by [minorities] over the years” (Goldberg, 1075-1076).

The campaign for Amendment 2 stressed its intention against “special rights”—a ubiquitous term throughout the campaign—for “lesbians and gay men” to persuade voters that providing such protection would diminish the “special rights” for racial and ethnic minorities, a presumption that the pro-Amendment 2 campaigners favored such “special rights” for Latino and African American communities, for example. This tactic was addressed in Suzanne B. Goldberg’s 1994 article, “Gay Rights Through the Looking Glass: Politics, Morality and the Trial of Colorado's Amendment 2”:

The Colorado Amendment 2 campaign was successful largely because it centered on the “No Special Rights” theme. By characterizing protection against sexual orientation discrimination as “special rights” for lesbians and gay men, the movement succeeded in appealing to voters who cared little about homosexuality, but who held a general aversion to civil rights protections for any group. The misrepresentation of civil rights as protective laws which benefit only minority groups (hence the term

"special rights") has long been used as a strategy to attack those laws. After the success of the "special rights" rhetoric in Colorado, other state organizers used the same strategy (page 1059).

The terms “minority or protected status” and “quota preferences” were prominent in the ballot language:

Shall there be an amendment to Article II of the Colorado Constitution to prohibit the state of Colorado and any of its political subdivisions from adopting or enforcing any law or policy which provides that homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual orientation, conduct, or relationships constitutes or entitles a person to claim any minority or protected status, quota preferences, or discrimination? (BALLOTPEDIA, Encyclopedia of State Ballots.)

The placement of “discrimination,” following the charged “protected status [and] quota preferences” terms, meant that a vote favoring Amendment 2 would also prohibit GLB community members from filing a charge against discrimination, whether or not that was the voter’s intent. Immediately following was the statement of what the Amendment would provide:

Neither the State of Colorado, through any of its branches or departments, nor any of its agencies, political subdivisions, municipalities or school districts, shall enact, adopt or enforce any statute, regulation, ordinance or policy whereby homosexual, lesbian or bisexual orientation, conduct, practices or relationships shall constitute or otherwise be the basis of or entitle any person or class of persons to have or claim any minority status, quota preferences, protected status or claim of discrimination.

This Section of the Constitution shall be in all respects self-executing. (Evans v. Romer, 882 P.2d 1335)

Amendment 2 was a Constitutional Amendment, a change and addition to the Colorado State Constitution; this is different from a “proposition.” Both are referred to, or decided by, a vote of the citizens of the state. However, a “Constitutional Amendment” can only be changed by another vote of the citizens,

whereas a “proposition” can be changed or even removed and expunged by the Colorado State Legislature. The Legislature acting on its own can submit or refer a proposition to the citizen voters by a simple majority of the legislators, but a two-thirds majority vote within the Legislature is needed to refer a Constitutional Amendment to the voters. The Amendment 2 backers gathered sufficient signatures to refer it to the voters. By proposing it as a Constitutional Amendment rather than a proposition, Amendment 2 backers were intent on establishing it firmly into Colorado law and making it subsequently extremely difficult to remove.

The campaign in favor of Amendment 2 began in earnest in May, 1992, when the supporters filed the petition. Following the voter approval on November 3, 1992, “The secretary of state certified the results on December 16, 1992, as required by article V, section 1, of the state constitution” (Evans v. Romer, Section I). Even before the Secretary of State certified the results, on November 12 a lawsuit in Denver District Court was filed “to enjoin the enforcement of Amendment 2 claiming that the amendment was unconstitutional” (Section I). The lawsuit was filed by Richard G. Evans, eight other individuals, and the cities of Denver, Boulder, Aspen, and the Aspen City Council. “On January 15, 1993, the Colorado District Court issued a preliminary injunction preventing state officials from enforcing the amendment. On July 19, 1993, the Colorado Supreme Court affirmed the District Court's issuance of the preliminary injunction and held that the amendment infringed on plaintiffs' fundamental right to participate equally in the political process” (Grauerholz, page 846).

On December 14, 1993, almost one year after he had issued his initial injunction prohibiting Amendment 2 from becoming law, Colorado District Court Judge Jeffrey Bayless declared Amendment 2 unconstitutional. Following that decision, the pro-Amendment 2 side appealed Judge Bayless' decision to the Colorado Supreme Court, which heard the arguments during 1994. On October 11, 1994, nearly two years after Amendment 2 was approved by voters, the Court upheld Judge Bayless' decision and declared Amendment 2 unconstitutional. It was a very strong repudiation of the amendment, refuting every argument the pro-Amendment 2 side had presented in trial. The Court based much of its ruling on the “Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution [which] protects the fundamental right to participate equally in the political process,” declaring Amendment 2 would have infringed on this right of an “independently



identifiable class of persons,” gays and lesbians (Justia U.S. Law, *Evans v. Romer*, 1994, pages 1-3). The Court summarized in its ruling the six arguments of the pro-Amendment 2 side:

At trial the defendants offered six "compelling" state interests: (1) deterring factionalism; (2) preserving the integrity of the state's political functions; (3) preserving the ability of the state to remedy discrimination against suspect classes; (4) preventing the government from interfering with personal, familial, and religious privacy; (5) preventing government from subsidizing the political objectives of a special interest group; and (6) promoting the physical and psychological well-being \*1340 of Colorado children (Justia U.S. Law, Section I).

A review of all six “‘compelling’ state interests” argued by the pro-Amendment 2 backers is beyond the scope of this NACCS article. However, the attempt by the pro-Amendment 2 backers to use racial and ethnic minorities against the GLB community was considered by the Court and was of special concern to the NACCS involvement in the case. This “state interest” is referred to by the Court as item #3, above: “(3) preserving the ability of the state to remedy discrimination against suspect classes.” The pro-Amendment 2 side argued in court that invalidating it would harm the State’s fiscal ability to ensure civil rights for those who are in a “minority status, [receive] quota preferences, protected status [and can claim] discrimination” based on their minority status, including as racial and ethnic minorities. However, the Court declared the following:

Assuming that the state has some legitimate interest in preserving fiscal resources for the enforcement of civil rights laws intended to protect suspect classes, and... recognizing that combating discrimination against racial minorities and women may constitute a compelling governmental interest... the evidence presented indicates that Amendment 2 is not necessary to achieve these goals. (*Evans v. Romer*, Part B)

The pro-Amendment 2 side’s approach therefore was to use “racial minorities and women” to serve as a wedge against gays and lesbians to promote the passage of Amendment 2 and then to further employ them as a ruse to ensure the injunction

against it was overturned by the State Supreme Court. However, the Court declared, “we conclude that defendants' asserted interest in preserving the fiscal resources of state and local governments for the exclusive use of enforcing civil rights laws intended to protect suspect classes does not constitute a compelling state interest.” The Court concluded on this, the third of six asserted “state’s interests” arguments, by declaring that, “The governmental interest in insuring adequate resources for the enforcement of civil rights laws designed to protect suspect classes from discrimination need not be accomplished by denying the right of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals from participating equally in the political process.” The Colorado Supreme Court ruled on October 11, 1994, nearly two years after Amendment 2 was approved by voters, that Amendment 2 was an unconstitutional infringement on the rights of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, refuting the six suppositions the pro-Amendment 2 side had put forth.

During and following 1994, NACS (then National Association for Chicano Studies) decided that the Association should join in supporting the anti-Amendment 2 petitioners. It was determined at the 1993 conference in San Jose, California during the Business Meeting, where NACS resolutions would be introduced, that Colorado should be boycotted as a show of support for the gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities. By this time, a national boycott of Colorado, dubbed then “The Hate State” for Amendment 2, had been called and was gaining momentum. This NACS resolution was introduced in the Business Meeting since at that time resolutions could be offered from the floor. This boycott resulted in the cancelation of the 1994 NACS national conference, since the Colorado Foco was the only NACS state or region considering a proposal to host a conference (NACCS Noticias).

Following the 1993 San Jose, California NACS conference, the Coordinating Committee, or NACS Board, communicated among themselves how best to advance the wishes and intent of the membership, which had been expressed during the Business Meeting: to boycott Colorado, *and* to engage actively in the struggle against Amendment 2. During this period, the idea was advanced of joining in an Amicus Brief (Friend of the Court) should the battle move to the United States Supreme Court for resolution. The recommendation was then developed that the Coordinating Committee, or Board, would draft a statement to the principal lawyers who were directing the lawsuit to the Colorado

Supreme Court and subsequently organizing the lawsuit to the United States Supreme Court. The Coordinating Committee would assist, but the drafting of our offer and request to the lead legal team was assigned to Dr. Yolanda Chavez Leyva, Lesbian Caucus Chair, at the University of Arizona, and to Dr. Luis Torres, NACS General Coordinator, then at the University of Southern Colorado.

The Colorado Supreme Court ruling of October 11, 1994 roughly coincided with the NACS Coordinating Committee midyear meeting. That meeting was held in Seattle, Washington, in preparation for the following national conference, scheduled in Spokane, Washington March 29—April 1, 1995. At that Coordinating Committee meeting in Seattle, the decision was made for NACCS to donate \$1,000 to the legal fund against Amendment 2. Luis Torres, then General Coordinator, or NACS Chair, had been communicating with Ms. Jean Dubofsky, Esq., lead lawyer for the anti-Amendment 2 side, before the Seattle meeting and subsequently informed her that the Coordinating Committee had decided to donate the funds. The amount was quite modest, considering the inordinate expenses to prosecute the lawsuits to the U.S. Supreme Court, and NACS was struggling with finances, but the Coordinating Committee was resolute the donation was necessary as *Amicus*.

For NACS to be admitted as an *Amicus*, or Friend, of the forthcoming Education Brief, Drs. Chavez Leyva and Torres had to explain in a written statement why NACS should be allowed to join. We had to explain whether NACS had a history of being active in combating discrimination against the gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities. That Dr. Chavez Leyva was the Chair of the NACS Lesbian Caucus served us well in this regard, as the Caucus and the Chair position demonstrated such a history.

During at least two in-person conferences with Ms. Jean Dubofsky, she informed Luis Torres that involvement by NACS was highly significant because we would be the only association representing people of color in the Education Brief. This was very important to their legal strategy because the pro-Amendment 2 side had been so effective in driving a wedge between the GLB communities, on the one hand, and people of color, on the other; so NACS would serve as a strong counterpoint to the pro-Amendment 2 side's legal argument.

NACCS would also be one of only two higher-education associations in the Education Brief.

### **NACCS as *Amicus* in Education Brief to the United States Supreme Court**

The Education Brief, with NACCS as *Amicus*, to the United States Supreme Court was against Amendment 2 and therefore against the case specifically known as Romer vs. Evans. [“NACCS” had changed to “NACCS,” just before the Brief was filed.] NACCS had joined with the petitioners against the case beginning in 1994, as both sides were proceeding toward a U.S. Supreme Court hearing. The case was heard in the U.S. Supreme Court during the session which began for the October term, 1995. The case was identified as “No. 94-1039 Romer vs. Evans.” Roy Romer (D) was Governor of Colorado, so it was his duty to file on behalf of the state against the Colorado Supreme Court’s ruling of 1993, which had decided against Amendment 2. The oral argument was heard by the Court on October 10, 1995. Their opinion was announced May 20, 1996.

Several associations, organizations, groups, and individuals filed *amicus curiae* briefs (friend of the court, in singular) both against and for Amendment 2. Several filed *for* the anti-Amendment 2 side, which meant they were *opposed to* Amendment 2, since *for* meant they supported retaining the Colorado Supreme Court ruling striking down Amendment 2. One brief was from national civil rights groups of color, including the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, among others. Another brief was joined by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the Women’s Legal Defense Fund. A third was by psychologists and psychiatrists, including The American Psychology Association, The National Association of Social Workers, and The Colorado Psychological Association.

Several *amici* (friends, in plural) filed *for* the pro-Amendment 2 petitioners, which meant they were *in favor of* Amendment 2 and so *against* the Colorado Supreme Court ruling. For example, a brief was filed by the Oregon Citizens Alliance, No Special Rights Committee and Stop Special Rights—PAC, and another was by a Colorado for Family Values representative. Other *Amici curiae* in favor of Amendment 2 were filed by the Attorneys General for Alabama, California, Idaho, Nebraska, South Carolina, South Dakota, and

Virginia. Others were filed for or against Amendment 2, signifying the national breadth of interest this issue generated.

The brief NACCS engaged in as *amicus curiae* was the Education brief, filed by six major education associations (seven with the NEA affiliate, CEA):

National Education Association, and its affiliate Colorado Education Association (CEA);  
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO;  
American Association of University Professors (AAUP);  
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development;  
Council of the Great City Schools;  
National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies.

These six groups were joined together by their special relationship with education, whether K—12 or higher education. Two groups, NACCS and AAUP, emphasized higher education; as Amendment 2 states, its reach was to all Colorado state “branches or departments, [and] its agencies, political subdivisions, municipalities or school districts.” The “school districts” are particularly for K—12, but higher education institutions were included through the Colorado Department of Higher Education as one of the “branches or departments” of Colorado.

The Education Brief has three sections: 1) Interest of *Amici Curiae*; 2) Introduction and Summary of Argument; 3) Argument. In the first section the *amici* established their standing for filing. As the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) stated in its self-description, “Since 1976, AAUP has condemned discrimination in the academic community on the basis of sexual orientation. The organization seeks adoption of similar policies by colleges and universities.” The Council of the Great City Schools in the brief noted it “is a coalition of some 50 of the nation's largest urban public school systems. Its members' inner-city schools serve about six million children (13.5 percent of the nation's total elementary and secondary school enrollment).” The Council states, “One of the central missions of these schools is to create educational opportunities for youth whose background or status would otherwise doom them to a second-class future. That includes students no matter their gender or sexual orientation” (Education Brief, page 3).

The paragraph for NACCS was drafted jointly by the Chair of the Lesbian Caucus, Dr. Yolanda Chavez Leyva, and the Chair of NACCS, Dr. Luis Torres. It

was edited, for length and linguistic uniformity with the other statements, by the anti-Amendment 2 lawyers for the case. The NACCS contribution to the amicus brief was very similar in language and tone to those of the additional *amici*. From Luis Torres' personal memory, the opportunity to join in the brief was dependent for the *amici* on this particular brief to focus on education with with the associations national previous engagement in anti-discrimination efforts in support of the GLB community. Each of the *amici* were provided one paragraph, of roughly equal length, to introduce their associations at the beginning of the brief, with the joint arguments against Amendment 2 following, at length. The NACCS passage reads as follows:

The National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies ("NACCS"), with a membership of approximately 2,000, is the oldest and largest organization bringing together Chicana and Chicano academics, students, and community members from across the nation and across disciplinary lines. NACCS confronts and challenges structures of inequality based on race, class, gender, and sexuality. As an organization historically concerned with the quality of life of all Chicanas and Chicanos, NACCS asserts that discrimination against any members of the community is discrimination against all. As an academic community with firsthand experience of discrimination and prejudice in society and throughout education, NACCS strongly believes that academic development and freedom depend on a climate of mutual respect and acceptance of diversity.

Of special note regarding NACCS' standing for serving as an *amicus* was the sentence, "NACCS confronts and challenges structures of inequality based on race, class, gender, and sexuality," noting the association's inherent opposition to Amendment 2. Following the NACCS statement, a summary paragraph demonstrated the similarity of purpose for the six *amici*:

Because *amici* are opposed to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, because *amici* believe that public school districts must be able to prohibit such discrimination and otherwise provide for the needs of gay and lesbian students if they are to fulfill their educational mission, and because *amici* share an institutional commitment to the educational mission of the public schools, *amici* have a substantial interest in the outcome of this case.

The second section of the brief introduced and summarized the legal arguments concerning Amendment 2's impact on education. It notes, "As organizations concerned with the quality of public education, *amici* file this brief in order to provide this Court with a perspective on the impact of Amendment 2 that it might not otherwise receive. Specifically, we shall demonstrate why Amendment 2 significantly would impair the ability of the public schools to fulfill their educational mission." The scope of the damage Amendment 2 would have done throughout Colorado, and in the rest of the country, is shown in the Brief's statement: "Based upon what is known about the incidence of homosexuality in the general population, however, it can be assumed that there are students in almost every classroom in the country who are gay or lesbian" (pages 5-6).

The "Argument" section consists of two sections. In Section I, the Brief advocates for schools to address as their mission the educational needs of all students, including gay and lesbian students. The Amendment 2 wording stressed "orientation" in the heading and body of the text; but the Brief's "Argument" section refers to a belief supported by research that this "orientation" possibly "becomes fixed before puberty, quite possibly by the age of five or six" (page 8), calling into question the term "orientation." Granting Coloradans the right to engage in "invidious discrimination against the members of one minority group" undermines the schools' ability to teach all students about respect for "those who are different."

While students from racial and ethnic minority groups might realize they are different from the larger society and therefore reviled, they benefit somewhat from membership within their own group, from which they receive some solace. For gay and lesbian students, rejection is particularly acute because they "usually discover their sexual orientation in complete isolation" without a support group, so they internalize the fact of being despised alone (page 10), often ending up rejected even from their own families. As Hetrick and Martin are quoted in the brief, while "Blacks, Jews, and Hispanics are not thrown out of their families or religions at adolescence for being black, Jewish, or Hispanic[,] homosexual adolescents are" (*Developmental Issues and Their Resolution for Gay and Lesbian Adolescents*, pages 25, 29).

This first passage of the "Argument" section further notes that "One study of gay adolescents found that nearly half of the subjects had left

their home at least once,” not of their own accord but as "pushaways" or "throwaways" (page 14). The alienation becomes so extreme that “suicide is the leading cause of death among gay and lesbian youth,” with 20 percent having attempted suicide (page 15). In higher education, where one might presume a more tolerant, if not accepting, environment, gay and lesbian students were considered four times as likely as the general student population to be victims of physical attacks (page 17). This passage concludes asserting schools must ensure that “regardless of race, sex, religion, ethnic origin, disability, or any other distinguishing characteristic—such as sexual orientation—all people should be judged according to their individual merit rather than on the basis of invidious stereotypes.”

Passage II of the Argument asserts that “Amendment 2 undermines the ability of the public schools to meet the needs of gay and lesbian students and to teach all students the broader lesson of tolerance.” The brief notes that “education-related organizations such as *amici*” who filed this Education Brief (including NACCS) attempt to meet the needs of gay and lesbian students. This implies Amendment 2, if allowed to endure, could invalidate such efforts, including by prohibiting such programs as in-service training for teachers to provide counseling for gay and lesbian students (21). The amendment would place “gay and lesbian teachers [who] reveal their sexual orientation” at risk of dismissal from their teaching careers, despite that they could serve as role models to gay and lesbian students (page 22).

The City of Denver had enacted an ordinance prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation—one of the targets of Amendment 2—but even with such protection, gay and lesbian teachers in Denver Public Schools reported apprehension to mentor gay and lesbian students, fearing reprisal despite the ordinance. With Amendment 2, such counseling would have placed these teachers at heightened risk. This Education Brief ends by declaring that with Amendment 2, “the State officially sanctions discrimination,” with the pernicious effect that it serves as prologue to discrimination against other groups seen as different.



**U.S. Supreme Court Decision on Romer v. Evans, 517 U.S. 620 (1996)**

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against Amendment 2 on May 20, 1996, on a vote of 6-3. Following its introductory paragraph summarizing the case, it held that Amendment 2 was subject to strict scrutiny under the Fourteenth Amendment because it infringed the fundamental right of gays and lesbians to participate in the political process noting

.... On remand, the State advanced various arguments in an effort to show that Amendment 2 was narrowly tailored to serve compelling interests, but the trial court found none sufficient.... We granted certiorari, 513 U. S. 1146 (1995), and now affirm the judgment, but on a rationale different from that adopted by the State Supreme Court” (pages 625-626).

The State of Colorado and the pro-Amendment 2 advocates engaged as their “principal argument” that Amendment 2 merely places Gays and Lesbians in the same position as all other persons “by denying them special rights,” but the Court stated that they “rejected as implausible” this contorted assertion. The Amendment would have placed a specific legal burden or “disability upon those persons alone” of facing discrimination without legal protection in “public and private transactions” (page 621). The Court stated, “Amendment 2 fails, indeed defies,” the Fourteenth Amendment’s equal protection of a “suspect class” in ensuring that a “legitimate legislative end” of a state does not violate such protection.

The Court addressed the six rationales the State had asserted and responded that, “the amendment cannot be explained by reference to those reasons; the amendment raises the inevitable inference that it is born of animosity toward the class that it affects.” In the Majority Opinion, Justice Kennedy stressed the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, and noted that before Amendment 2, some ordinances protecting gays, lesbians, and bisexuals had been passed in Colorado:

[T]he cities of Aspen and Boulder and the city and County of Denver each had enacted ordinances which banned discrimination in many transactions and activities, including housing, employment, education, public

accommodations, and health and welfare services” offering protection to “persons discriminated against by reason of their sexual orientation,” that is, homosexuals, lesbians, or bisexuals (page 624).

He pointedly supported and affirmed the legal rationales established by the Colorado Supreme Court in rejecting Amendment 2, as discussed above. Of particular interest to NACCS is the passage that notes two specific higher education institutions that had enacted protections for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, statutes which would have been repealed by Amendment 2, as follows:

...various prOVISIONs [sic] prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation at state colleges.<sup>26</sup>

"<sup>26</sup> Metropolitan State College of Denver prohibits college sponsored social clubs from discriminating in membership on the basis of sexual orientation and Colorado State University has an antidiscrimination policy which encompasses sexual orientation.

(Note: In 2012, Metropolitan State College of Denver was renamed Metropolitan State University of Denver.)

In a decisive rebuttal of the Amendment, Justice Kennedy affirmed the Colorado Supreme Court’s decisions and expressed the dire position facing the affected groups:

So much is evident from the ordinances the Colorado Supreme Court declared would be void by operation of Amendment 2. Homosexuals, by state decree, are put in a solitary class with respect to transactions and relations in both the private and governmental spheres. The amendment withdraws from homosexuals, but no others, specific legal protection from the injuries caused by discrimination, and it forbids reinstatement of these laws and policies.

Beyond upholding the rights of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals to be protected from discrimination by businesses and commerce, the Court further upheld the right of the State to ensure protections by and in government entities. The Court stated that Amendment 2 would have “rescinded” such directives as the

Colorado Executive Order D0035 (1990), which forbids employment discrimination against "'all state employees, classified and exempt' on the basis of sexual orientation." 854 P. 2d, at 1284. Also repealed, and now forbidden, are "various provisions prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation at state colleges" (page 630).

The Court summarized the case by asserting, "Amendment 2 confounds [the] normal process of judicial review. It is at once too narrow and too broad. It identifies persons by a single trait and then denies them protection across the board. The resulting disqualification of a class of persons from the right to seek specific protection from the law is unprecedented in our jurisprudence" (634).

Three of the nine Supreme Court Justices dissented—Scalia, Rehnquist, and Thomas—and would have upheld Amendment 2. However, in conclusion, the six majority members of the Court affirmed that Amendment 2 cannot be upheld:

We must conclude that Amendment 2 classifies homosexuals not to further a proper legislative end but to make them unequal to everyone else. This Colorado cannot do. A State cannot so deem a class of persons a stranger to its laws. Amendment 2 violates the Equal Protection Clause, and the judgment of the Supreme Court of Colorado is affirmed.

It is so ordered (page 636).

### **Aftermath: Amendment 2 Defeated; Colorado—but no other state or region—Boycotted**

Thirty years after Amendment 2 was passed in Colorado, NACCS should look back over the years and be proud of our involvement in successfully defeating the viciously discriminatory anti-GLB Amendment 2. When the GLB community in Colorado was facing one of the worst such laws in the country, NACCS stood with the Chicana/o and other GLB community members and advocated on their behalf, consequences be damned. We signed on when the pro side had almost all of the political and social momentum, supported by powerful figures and with exceptional funding. Of all of the higher education associations and organizations and alliances and societies in the United States, NACCS was one of only two higher education groups to sign on as *amicus* to the education Amicus Brief to the

U.S. Supreme Court—the American Association of University Professors the other. The involvement by NACCS was crucial because we negated and even countermanded the pro-Amendment 2 use of racial and ethnic minorities in Colorado against the GLB community.

The conclusion of Amendment 2 for NACCS was the resultant boycott of Colorado, as explained above, that at the 1993 conference in San Jose, California during the Business Meeting, a resolution was introduced from the floor to boycott Colorado. While the Colorado Foco had not officially submitted a proposal to host the 1994 conference, there had been discussion of doing so and subsequent steps taken. Following the 1993 conference, no other region offered to host a 1994 conference. Amendment 2 was never implemented in Colorado, neither shortly after the vote, when it was “stayed” by a judge, nor during the appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. Denver—where a conference in 1994 would have been held.

Following the 1994 boycott, the 1995 conference was held in Spokane, Washington, with the following, in 1996, in Chicago, followed by the 1997 conference in Sacramento, California (NACCS Conference Archives). The 1997 conference ushered in a string of NACCS conferences held in states with anti-GLB and other malicious propositions and laws, but no corresponding boycotts: Colorado was ostracized and shunned, while California, Utah, Texas, Florida, and Mexico were embraced despite analogous laws.

On November 8, 1994, the same year of the Colorado boycott, California passed the ruthless anti-immigrant Proposition 187, approved by a vote of 59% to 41%. It would have “prohibited the undocumented from accessing basic public services such as non-emergency health care and both primary and secondary education,” therefore targeting even children in education (Proposition 187 is Approved in California). It was “stayed” by a judge but “was held up in the appeals process until 1999.” The NACCS 1997 conference in Sacramento was held in the middle of the 1994-1999 Proposition 187 legal disputes.

Almost concurrent with Prop 187, the Ron Unz “Proposition 227, the ‘English Language in Public Schools Initiative Statute,’ was adopted by voters in California in June 1998. It went into effect 60 days later.... [It] requires all public school instruction to be in English... [and] allows parents and guardians to sue to enforce the law” (Lohman, “Effects of California Bilingual Education Proposition”). Proposition 227 effectively ended bilingual education, with some exceptions, and was in effect for 18 years, until repealed by Proposition 58 in

2016 (Sanchez). (Colorado defeated its counterpart, Amendment 31, in 2002, the Ron Unz-led bill introduced in Colorado following California’s passing of Proposition 227.) However, NACCS did not boycott California over Proposition 187 or over Proposition 227.

In 2000, California also passed Proposition 22, the anti-GLB “Definition of Marriage Initiative.” A “Yes” vote “supported defining marriage between a man and a woman in the California Family Code.” It passed with a 61.35% “Yes” vote. This anti-GLB Proposition, negating GLB marriages, was in effect until 2008 when courts overruled it (California Proposition 22). “Shortly before the court struck down Proposition 22, California Proposition 8 qualified for the ballot. The goal of Proposition 8’s supporters was similar to the goals of Proposition 22 supporters. Proposition 8 amended the California Constitution, whereas Proposition 22 was a state statute. Proposition 8 went on to win at the polls in November 2008” (California Proposition 22). NACCS did not call for a boycott of California over Proposition 22 or Proposition 8.

Continuing with the differential treatment of boycotting Colorado but not other states, Texas had an anti-sodomy law against “homosexual conduct.” In 1998, in the case “Lawrence vs. Texas,” four deputies arrested Mr. Lawrence for engaging in sex with another man. The “two men, Tyron Garner and John Lawrence, were arrested, held overnight, charged, and convicted for violating Texas penal code section 21.06(a),” also known as the “Homosexual Conduct” law. The case was argued in March of 2003, and the decision overturning the conviction issued June 2003. NACCS held its 1998 conference in Texas despite that the case against Texas’ “anti-sodomy law” was still pending.

While same-sex marriage was illegal in Utah, NACCS held its conference in the state. Similarly, Florida’s anti-GLB “Defense of Marriage Act” defined “marriage as between a man and a woman,” was not declared unconstitutional until 2013. Florida also banned gay adoption of children until 2008, with the issue still unsettled in Florida despite that “courts [having] ruled that it was unconstitutional to forbid gay adoption” (Gay Marriage Laws in Florida). Despite these laws, in 2005 the NACCS conference was held in Miami, Florida.

Mexico as a “region” of NACCS provides another example. During the 1998 NACCS conference in Mexico City, the NACCS Joto Caucus set out to have a welcoming reception in one of the smaller ballrooms in their hotel. They were summarily stopped from having that reception by hotel staff. Members of the Joto Caucus came to the NACCS headquarters hotel near the Zocalo, by my

recollection (Luis Torres) distraught. This situation was representative of anti-GLB laws in Mexico. Same-sex marriage was not allowed until 2015, and even then, with extra processes, such as request of an injunction, more onerous than for heterosexual couples (Masci, David, et. al.) Despite such anti-GLB laws, NACCS held its 2006 Conference in Guadalajara.

**Conclusion:**

The very successful involvement by NACCS in the anti-Amendment 2 struggle in Colorado was admirable and exhibited resolve and vision, entering the conflict at a very low point for the GLB community in the state, finally proving victorious. However, following that victory, with the boycott of Colorado and the subsequent failure to boycott at least four other states—California, Utah, Texas, and Florida—and the Mexico region, NACCS exhibited discrimination against Colorado. It was not the boycott itself that was problematic. Rather, the dilemma that I believe still haunts NACCS was the failure to treat those four other states and one region as Colorado had been treated.

In this aftermath, Colorado improved a great deal in relation to GLBTQIA+ rights. This growth is demonstrated in two telling examples. The Governor of Colorado, Jared Polis, was noted in 2021 as “the first openly gay man in the United States to be elected governor” when he was elected in 2018 (Polis, 1<sup>st</sup> openly gay governor elected). He is married to Marlon Reis, and they have adopted two children. Also, in 2019, the Colorado Legislature passed a legislative bill, HB19-1192, mandating Multicultural Studies (MCS) in K-12, requiring both cultural infusion in K-12 curricula and a graduation requirement class in MCS. The preamble paragraph for HB19-1192, “Inclusion of American Minorities in Teaching Civil Government,” reads in part,

Concerning the inclusion of matters relating to American minorities in the teaching of social contributions in civil government in public schools, and, in connection therewith, establishing the history, culture, social contributions, and civil government in education commission to make recommendations to include the history, culture, and social contributions of American Indians, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals within these minority groups... and the intersectionality of significant social and cultural features within these communities (Colorado HB19-1192).

Colorado’s election of Governor Jared Polis and the GLBT inclusion in the Multicultural Studies bill demonstrate the growth in Colorado since Amendment 2, now supporting GLBT rights. The efforts by many people and groups, including significantly by NACCS, assisted both the GLBT community in particular and Colorado in general in their evolution and progress.

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Retrospective: Shifting and Shaping Lesbian/Queer Space Within  
NACCS  
Chicana Caucus Plenary: Demanding Space: Chicana and  
Lesbian/LBMT Caucuses De-centering Patriarchal Heteronormativity  
within NACCS

Rusty Barceló

A special thank you to the NACCS Chicana Caucus Co-Chairs, Drs. Yvette Saavedra and Isabel Millán, for inviting me to share remarks for the 30th Year Anniversary of the Chicana Caucus with my amazing co-panelists, colleagues, and friends.<sup>1</sup>

It is with great fondness that I remember meeting all the panelist, Drs. Rita E. Urquijo-Ruiz, Anita Tijerina Revilla, and Sandy Soto when they were graduate students; today they are professors and academic administrators. So, it is an honor to be on this panel and reassuring to know that the dream we had over 30 years ago to encourage Chicanas and Indigenous women to pursue academic careers has become more of a reality today. Each of the panelists, and others, through their scholarship, teaching, and academic activism are contributing to the shifting and re-shaping of the academy and of NACCS.

Because my life in higher education encompasses over 50 Years, I have had the opportunity to witness the evolution of NACCS almost from its beginning; and

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<sup>1</sup> National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) 2022 Virtual Conference, Chicana Caucus Plenary, “*Demanding Space: Chicana and Lesbian/LBMT Caucuses De-centering Patriarchal Heteronormativity within NACCS*,” April 23, 2022. This plenary was organized as a plática; each speaker shared their initial comments and then panelists were invited to respond to one another.

what a story it has been with the most recent stories and challenges being our surviving of. So, my thanks and gratitude to the NACCS leadership for all they are doing to keep us engaged through the sharing and valuing of our work via this conference.<sup>2</sup>

The challenges of change within NACCS, throughout our history, has tested the very core of this organization. NACCS, though, has survived because we understood, for the most part, the need for this organization to create an inclusive space as a means for broadening the academic discourse. More specifically, the NACCS Chicana and Lesbian Caucuses provided space for the development of our role as Chicana Lesbian scholars, giving us agency to broaden the context of Chicano Studies with the inclusion of Chicana and Queer Chicana scholarship, which was often met with resistance by both NACCS colleagues and our respective campus colleagues.<sup>3</sup> This is not to say, all is perfect now. We know there is still much work to do within NACCS and the academy, as it relates to Chicanas/x and the Chicana/x Queer community.

I do think it is important to note that Chicana/x Queers have been part of NACCS since its inception. The founding of the Chicana Caucus acknowledged formally our existence as scholars because we always created space as an informal caucus in our hotel and dorm rooms, restaurants, bars. In those spaces we discussed how we might address sexism and homophobia within NACCS. While the focus of this panel is “de-centering patriarchal heteronormativity,” we should also remember there was also some resistance among ourselves within the Chicana Caucus. This is part of our history as a Caucus that should not be forgotten and, I would argue,

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<sup>2</sup> With the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-2022 still active, NACCS 2022 was its second online annual conference, Ed.

<sup>3</sup> For historical context on this continuing struggle, see, for example, Castañeda, Antonia Castañeda, Marie “Keta” Miranda, Marisol Moreno, et al., “Ending Heteropatriarchal Institutional Violence in Chicano Studies: A Reflection on Our Path,” *Chicana/Latina Studies* 13, no. 2 (2014): 104–17. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43941433>. The authors note: “Previously and still, feminist, lesbian, and gay people persist in raising issues of inequalities of gender and sexuality and continue to be silenced in our movement. Charges of “malinchistas,” “traitors,” “vendidas,” “lesbionage,” and “gringa feminist crap” were/are accompanied with sexual and/or physical violence” (110).

contributed to the growth and development of the Lesbian Caucus as we know it today.<sup>4</sup>

As I was preparing for this presentation, I was reminded of some of my remarks at the opening plenary for the 2016 NACCS Conference that I think still are true and that I would like to share:

I recognize that our paths will sometimes diverge, and our immediate interests collide, even when we share common goals. For Queer Chicanas, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality intersect at the crossroads of a complex multicultural identity. With that, sometimes contested, intersection as our starting point, navigation of the road ahead will be especially complicated, particularly as we encounter roadblocks of homophobia and misogyny constructed not only by the dominant culture but also by our own brothers and sisters.

We can, and must, *never forget* the struggles that brought us to this point in time, and the acts of exclusion and violence that we sometimes endured, like the NACCS conference at Hermosillo (1991) where homophobia was alive and well as the jotos were trying to organize. Along the walls of the hotel were homophobic posters that were quickly removed. Some tried to convince us they were only jokes. All of us queers, regardless of gender, felt threatened at that conference.

I remember the conference in New Mexico when Chicanas came together at a workshop to discuss the proposal for a Chicana Caucus. The gathering generated so much interest that the room was overflowing with many sitting on the floors, standing against the wall, Chicanas at the door and hallway who could not enter. There was an excitement in the room for change as well as tension because not

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<sup>4</sup> The Lesbian Caucus changed its name to the Lesbian, Bi Mujeres, Trans (LBMT) Caucus. See Anita Revilla, “The Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship: A Movimiento for Queer Chicana/os and Latina/os,” *Aztlán* 39 no. (2014): 253-259; José Manuel Santillana Blanco, “Chicana Feminism,” in the *Encyclopedia of Queer Studies in Education*, eds. Kamden Strunk and Stephanie Anne Shelton (Boston: Brill, 2021), 84.

everyone was “out” and not everyone agreed there should be a Chicana Caucus, let alone a Lesbian Caucus.<sup>5</sup>

Frankly, I do not recall any men being present at the New Mexico NACCS Conference. We should remember, that for the most part “Transgender” was not part of the discussion at that point in our history but that is not to say it was not on the fringes of our conversations.

The leaders discussing the proposal were challenged by individuals who pointed out the proposal did not include lesbians and why that might be important. This led to cheers from those of us who identified as lesbians, as well as from allies; but it also included resistance by those who felt the Chicana Caucus naturally included lesbians. It was the same argument Chicanos raised as to why was there a need for a Chicana Caucus when NACCS has included Chicanas since its inception.

In 1998, at the NACCS Conference in Mexico City, the Lesbian Caucus/Jotos proposed representation on plenaries, and/or a plenary focusing on queers and more workshops about sexuality. It created quite a robust conversation in the hallways, over meals and more. When it came time to discuss the resolution at the business meeting, I was left alone as the only queer advocate since all the NACCS queers along with others went to participate in the Gay March in Mexico City. However, I learned more about the importance of allies at that meeting because, at that meeting, allies stood up for our proposal alongside of me.

And even within the Lesbian Caucus there have been struggles during the last 30 years as members of the Caucus called for us to be more inclusive of bisexual, transgender identities and more in the face of some resistance by membership. The conversations were often spirited and disrespectful. It became clear to me that, due to our fear of the unknown, change is difficult for us all.

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<sup>5</sup> For a timeline that places the caucus in this larger history of struggle, see William Calvo-Quirós with Antonia Castañeda, “How did We Get Here? A Short Timeline... a Long Tradition,” *News from Nepantla: UCSB Chicana and Chicano Studies Newsletter*, Fall 2012, <https://escholarship.org/content/qt3zb2t8k3/qt3zb2t8k3.pdf>.

When we have prevailed in spite of challenges, it is in part because we understood, at least intellectually, the importance of working together without denying individual group identity. Given the time in which we live, I am aware our struggles and our gains are reminders of how hard we will need to work together in the years ahead to sustain what we have achieved and to continue to grow our work.

This is especially important when so many ethnic studies programs are being challenged by anti-critical race theory advocates. Indeed, everything we have fought for and achieved is at risk as our institutions are being challenged about race, ethnicity, and sexuality.<sup>6</sup>

From the beginning, we understood that we had a responsibility to change the academic discourse as we made our way into NACCS and the academy. We challenged NACCS and our institutions to be more just and inclusive and sometimes paid a price for it. But we also created a new kind of academy and a new kind of NACCS that is still evolving.

I often shared with groups that Chicana/Queer voices have emerged in NACCS helping to shape today's interrogations of race, gender, and sexuality. These voices are creating our future in the academy and beyond...opening up new conversations in unexplored and new terrain.

The message I leave for NACCS, that I have shared in the past, is that we need to rethink and reshape what and who we aspire to be as an organization and how we will move forward as a community of scholars that is cohesive and inclusive.

Finally, we should not walk away when there are disagreements creating tensions—even if we feel unsafe. When anyone of us give up, we all lose.

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<sup>6</sup> For discussions of this backlash, see Ethan Chang, “Curricular Counter-movements: How White Parents Mounted a Popular Challenge to Ethnic Studies,” *Harvard Educational Review* 92, no. 2 (2022): 157–314; Augustine F. Romero, “At War with the State in Order to Save the Lives of Our Children: The Battle to Save Ethnic Studies in Arizona,” *Black Scholar* 40, no. 4 (2010): 7–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2010.11413528>; Conrado L. Gómez, and Salvador A. Gabaldon, “A Legacy of Memory: The Debate over Ethnic Studies in Arizona Public Schools.” *Aztlán* 38, no. 2 (2013): 163–74.

We've spent our lives and careers challenging the status quo, dismantling systems of exclusion and bias, and building something new. And now we are challenged as never before to find new ways to sustain our work and our gains over the long term. My belief is that this Chicana Caucus and the LBMT Caucus, with NACCS, will have a key role in this effort the next 30 years.

Thank you and I look forward to seeing all of you at the popular Queer NACCS dance that brings us all together next year.

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## PART TWO: Los Relatos de la Vida: Paths to Conocimiento

Only as we continue to examine the political realities of the Chicano community and as more investigative efforts are developed can an understanding be reached concerning what Chicanas are saying. They are telling the academic community that they do have a feeling of themselves as historical beings within their cultural context. They are saying that political involvement has always been a part of their lives. Perhaps their involvement is not totally documented at this point, this is why they are implementing the efforts necessary to bring their political reality into the academic community.

Evey Chapa and Armando Gutierrez  
"Chicanas in Politics," *NACSS Proceedings*, 1975

## Chisme Saves Lives: Chisme, and #MeToo as Storytelling Interventions in Sexual Violence

Amanda Tovar

I have always had a strained relationship with my mother, which was much worse when I was younger. Some days were good days filled with love and tenderness, and some days were filled with utter loneliness and despair. I never understood the constant shifts in her mood and to this day I am often perplexed by her. My perception of my mom shifted in December of 2011 when I texted her about my experience with incestual sexual abuse. The following day my mother traveled from her home in Houston to Edinburg, Texas where I was living at the time. She held me when I saw her, rubbed my head, and told me everything was going to be okay. I confessed to her that I could not keep this secret to myself anymore, that the nightmares were too severe. Following that moment, my mother shared with me her own #MeToo story. She informed me that she was also sexually abused, being groomed from a young age by her own father. In that very moment, hearing about her experience was too heavy to handle but in the days that followed I began to have a sense of clarity over *who* my mother was. It dawned on me that she lived years in silence not sharing with my sisters and me due to her own confusion about her experiences which Bessel Van Der Kolk describes as “bewilderment about the difference between love and terror; pain and pleasure.”<sup>1</sup> It was then that I began to wonder what my relationship with my mother would be had she told me about her experiences with incestual abuse sooner. Would it have been easier to have a relationship with her if I understood her? Would I be kinder to her? Would I be more willing to receive her love now that I knew about her own experience with sexual abuse?

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<sup>1</sup> Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 14.

My work aims to contribute to the ongoing conversations in the field of sexual abuse by demonstrating the ways chisme (or gossiping), and the #MeToo movement serve as active forms of storytelling, the action of telling any story whether fiction or nonfiction, that can be used as a form of healing. This work builds upon the work of scholars like Gloria González-López who utilizes *los relatos de vida*, rich oral practices of traditional stories and anecdotes in Mexican families as a methodology to emphasize incestual sexual abuse.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, I will utilize Gloria Anzaldúa's *autoteoria-historia*, or a "personal essay that theorizes," as a tool to tell my story to amplify my own voice.<sup>3</sup> The conceptual framework provided by González-López and Anzaldúa assists me in showcasing how chisme, and the #MeToo movement are *relatos de vida* and can be used as an important innovation of storytelling.

### ***Chisme as a Form of Storytelling***

In my hometown in the Rio Grande Valley, amongst my circle of friends that is "chisme saves lives," which literally translates to "gossip saves lives." Often chisme, or "chismeando," participating in chisme or gossip, is viewed by hometown community as extremely feminine; however, it is important to view chisme as a valuable praxis of storytelling. Author of *Medicine Stories: Essays for Radicals*, Aurora Levins Morales, writes "we have to choose which truths we tell based on the impact they will have. What do these truths allow people to think about? What actions can they ignite? Who is it most strategic to reach with a particular truth" regarding storytelling.<sup>4</sup> Engaging in chisme allows individuals to inform one another about potential sexual predators and abusers. In this context, chisme becomes a strategic and effective way of telling impactful stories that could potentially save lives.

While thinking about how chisme can save lives, I reflect upon my mother's story. My biological parents divorced when I was six years old, and my mother moved hours north of the Rio Grande Valley further straining our

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<sup>2</sup> Gloria González-López, *Family Secrets/Secretos De Familia: Stories of Incest and Sexual Violence in Mexico* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, ed. AnaLouise Keating (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 238.

<sup>4</sup> Aurora Levins Morales, *Medicine Stories: Essays for Radicals* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 45.

relationship. While divorce is stigmatized as untraditional by the Church—my family was steeped in heteronormative patriarchal expectations of silence. Anzaldúa writes that our culture “insists that women are subservient to males” and if she rebels, she is a *mujer mala*.<sup>5</sup> Speaking about incestual abuse is regarded as being defiant, a rebel, a *mujer mala*. On April 30, 2017, my mother posted a picture of herself at 7 years old holding her baby brother whom she promised to always protect (fig. 1). Within the post, she described how at 12 years old she came forward to a teacher and testified against her father. She also details being slut-shamed and labeled “attention seeking” by her own family. Growing up I did hear stories from her paternal family about my mother being imaginative and a *chismosa*—one who gossips. Had she not rebelled, had she not gossiped, her father may have also assaulted others in the family such as my mother’s sister, brother, me, or my sisters. Instead, my mother’s actions essentially saved us—our lives—from her father’s abuse.

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<sup>5</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute), 39.

April is an awareness month for many things including Autism, Parkinson's, and quite a few others.....

It is also sexual assault and child abuse prevention month....

I have been posting a lot about child abuse lately....I feel like it is something that society as a whole feels like it is something that should not be discussed....however, not discussing it is only hurting more and more innocent children. We need to stand up and stick up for the children who have no voice.

This means so much to me because at the age of around 3 years old I started being "groomed". I was sexually abused as a young child. I didn't know it was wrong. I didn't know that I was allowed to say "NO". I was never told about sexual abuse. I was told not to talk to strangers....but this person wasn't a stranger. This person was my hero. This person was the one I trusted more than anyone in the world.....

When I was 12 I watched a video in school about sexual abuse....I told my teacher that someone had done those things to me. I then had to testify against this person....I was blamed for the abuse....it was my fault. I was a slut and a whore. I was NEVER to speak about my abuse. No family member ever asked me how I was. Instead they didn't want me around.

I am now 42 years old and I am for the first time in my life able to talk about it. I have extreme insomnia and when I am able to sleep I wake up screaming from horrible nightmares...all from my abuse. I have extreme anxiety from it. I have self doubt and very low self-esteem. I have so many issues that most days I feel crazy. There is so much more to say.....

However...this post is NOT for pity or for any reason BUT for you to talk to your children about it. Sexual abuse was something I was NEVER allowed to discuss and that was so ingrained in me that I never even talked to my daughters about it.

PLEASE talk to your children....talk to your nieces and nephews, talk to your friends kids, talk to everyone about it. This is something that needs to be discussed. Only once everyone is able to talk about it can we try and stop it from happening to other children.

I do wanna thank those of you who have been here supporting me these last few months! Thank you for letting me cry. Thank you for checking on me. Thank you for loving me....all of me....even the broken parts.

I am adding a picture of me at 7 years old.....I had already been being abused for years....as I held my brother I made a promise I would always try and protect him.....I was 7! That shouldn't have been something that I should have been thinking.....

PLEASE talk about it....

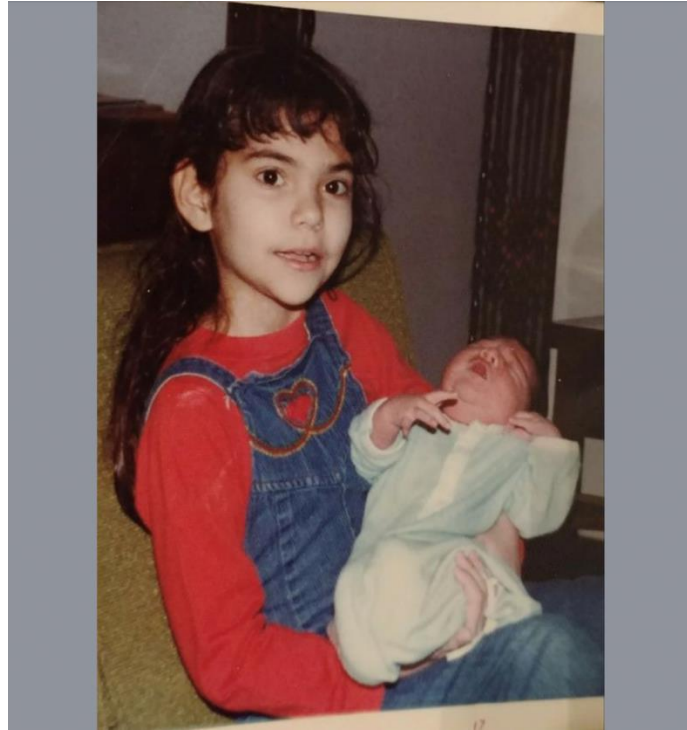


Figure 1, Facebook post by my mother with accompanying picture of her and her brother.

In *Las Hijas de Juan: Daughters Betrayed* author Josie Méndez-Negrete recounts the abuse she, her sisters, and her mother endured at the hands of her biological father, like my mother's experience. In the text, Méndez-Negrete's father is incarcerated because of the abuse he inflicted on his family and following that process the family begins to heal. Méndez-Negrete writes: "we abused girls who survived were drawn to each other like fireflies to light. Our lonely hearts and mangled souls made us friends. We, discarded and heartbroken girls, were attracted to each other like magnets. We created the embrace we needed to feel; we helped each other to survive."<sup>6</sup> She goes on to say that eventually her and her friends went on to "spill the beans" about their abuse, creating a sisterhood of survival.<sup>7</sup> Participating in chisme to form kinship,

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<sup>6</sup> Josie Méndez-Negrete, *Las Hijas De Juan: Daughters Betrayed* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 170.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.,170.

therefore, is one way to forge solidarity and community for one's sanity. In this sense it quite literally saves lives. Stories like my mother's and Méndez-Negrete's are quite literally *los relatos de vida* incarnate, one shared on Facebook, the other in the form of a book—both extremely important interventions in storytelling regarding sexual violence.

***#MeToo as Storytelling, With and Without a Hashtag***

In the fall of 2017, my Twitter feed was flooded with tweets with the accompanying #MeToo hashtag, and rightfully so. The #MeToo hashtag was intended to bring light to the insidious rate at which women were sexually assaulted by men to the public eye. During the commencement of the #MeToo movement, it was successful in the public take down of many celebrities, CEOs, and politicians, over two hundred cases in two years.<sup>8</sup> Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa's research on hashtags contest that Twitter is a powerful tool for digital protests that "does not just allow you to peer through a window; it allows you to look through manifold windows at once." While the #MeToo movement was culturally impactful, I am interested in how it allowed individuals to share their experiences of sexual violence even if they did not always use the hashtag.

I started openly speaking about my experience with incestual abuse in the spring of 2017 outside of my immediate family and eventually my experience made its way to my paternal grandmother. At first, she was angry with me and did not believe me. One of my aunts believed I was just seeking attention and lying. Likewise, my grandmother did not believe me until I did not invite her son to my wedding that she understood that my accusations were in fact the truth. I was at work when she called me to ask why I didn't invite him when she asked point blank "is it true, did he hurt you?" and I quietly but sternly said "yes." She started crying and saying, "I'm so sorry, baby!" over and over again. She hysterically asked me if I was going to send her son to jail, she prayed for me, and then we prayed together. She asked me not to ever publicly identify him by name because it would ruin the family. Before we got off the phone she said, "mi'jita, I've never told anyone this," cried and then said, "but my cousin used to hurt me, too. I have never ever said this to anyone before." Her words haunt me to this day. I often

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<sup>8</sup> Anna North, "More than 250 Powerful People Have Been Accused of Sexual Misconduct in the #MeToo Era. Here's a Running List.," Vox.com (Vox, January 9, 2019), <https://www.vox.com/a/sexual-harassment-assault-allegations-list>.

wonder if she would have believed me sooner if she had the opportunity to utilize *los relatos de vida* to speak about her experience with sexual abuse. While she did not take to social media to tell her story, this qualifies as part of the #MeToo movement because she told me to reassure me that I was not alone.

While the #MeToo movement began in 2017, people have been sharing their experiences with sexual violence long before that. In *Malinche's Daughter*, Michelle Otero recounts her experience in Oaxaca, Mexico where she hosts writing workshops for women who are survivors of sexual abuse, stating that they write to “heal their wounds.”<sup>9</sup> In this short text, Otero recounts her experiences of incestual sexual abuse at the hands of her brother when she was a child. Otero details an office visit with her therapist, Alma, who is treating her for post-traumatic stress disorder. During a session, Alma asks her to communicate with her childhood self and Otero eventually exclaims “it’s not your fault,” and “I was so little. And all I did was trust my brother. He was nice to me, and I felt lucky.”<sup>10</sup> Otero then exclaims that she, like my grandma, never told anyone about her experience with sexual violence. Eventually Otero shares that her workshop students and women friends confide in her that they also think they have been victims of sexual abuse. While #MeToo wasn’t explicitly said, it was implied.

### ***My Experience as a Form of Chisme, and #MeToo as Storytelling***

I was about thirteen when I first experienced incestual sexual abuse and was always coerced into staying quiet about it. However, I engaged in chisme and vaguely informed my sisters. I informed them to warn them because I did not want them to experience what I was experiencing at the time. My sisters and I have since talked about my uncle and I have asked them if he ever harmed them to which they informed me that because I vaguely told them about my experience, they steered clear of him. This instance of chisme saved their lives. And I don’t mean saved them from actual death, I mean what Huey P. Newton considers the death of the flesh—a spiritual death—where one lapses and lives in quiet despair and is much worse than physical death.<sup>11</sup> In this light, chisme about my *relato de*

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<sup>9</sup> Michelle Otero, *Malinche's Daughter* (Notre Dame: Momotombo Press, 2006), 26.

<sup>10</sup> Otero, *Malinche's Daughter*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Huey P Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 2.



*vida* is a valuable expression as storytelling because it served as a means for my sisters to remain guarded around a predator.

I painfully kept silent for years outside of a subtle warning to my sisters. In 2011, my uncle married a woman who has two young daughters, one being the same age as I was when the abuse began. I remember feeling sick to my stomach for days after hearing the news and somehow mustered up the courage to tell my father and stepmother—I was genuinely concerned for the wellbeing of the children. Me coming forward with my *relato de vida* was an act of lifesaving chisme. Although no one told my grandmother for some time, my father told his other siblings who informed my uncle's new wife. Although this caused some friction in my family with some of my cousins and aunts who do not believe me, other family members stopped associating with my uncle. Furthermore, his new wife insisted that she, him, and her children attend family and individual counseling to determine whether he was harming her children. To be quite honest, I never followed up on him in counseling but as someone who believes in abolishing the prison industrial complex, all I could hope for is accountability on his part and I firmly believe it starts in counseling.

Since I began sharing my *relatos de vida*, many friends and family have shared their experiences of sexual abuse whether incestual or at the hands of a partner or stranger—in this sense the #MeToo as a hashtag is a *relatos de vida*. Me coming forward to my family about my abuse served as my #MeToo moment for my mother and grandmother and provided me with the #MeToo stories I needed to hear the most. In those moments our *relatos de vida* intertwined and we were no longer carrying heavy burdens of incestual abuse alone. While my relationship with my mother is not completely perfect, I have a better understanding of what her life must have been like growing up which ultimately informed her parenting. To my knowledge, my mom was never vocal about her experience with incestual sexual abuse prior to my confession but her being vocal now provides me a sense of security I never knew I needed. I have a built-in partner in my journey. And while it may seem odd to have any positive feeling about that, bell hooks writes that mindful remembering helps us put the broken pieces of our hearts back together again and it is then that we begin to heal. It also

serves as a reminder that as I put my broken heart together, my mom is putting hers together and we are healing simultaneously.<sup>12</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In *Rape and Resistance: Understanding the Complexities of Sexual Violation*, Linda Martín Alcoff writes that “sexual violations transform us. Both victims and perpetrators are transformed as well as their families, friends, and social circles,” and it’s true.<sup>13</sup> I will forever be changed by my experience of incestual sexual abuse and so will the lives of my mother, my grandmother, and every other living person who has experienced sexual violence. Storytelling is an essential aspect of healing and combating feelings of isolation. In an online conversation I had with friend and colleague Sergio Barrera regarding sexual violence he said “first you write it. You reflect on it. Then you speak about it. And it is LIBERATING!”<sup>14</sup> Barrera’s use of all capital letters when saying “liberating” is why I argue in favor of storytelling as a necessary tool—it is liberating. Often, we are taught that silence is better for our families, but silence is an act of violence. Since my initial conversation with my grandmother, her attitude towards sexual violence has shifted, and I believe she now understands the importance of speaking on the subject since sharing her story has now made her “incest burden” lighter.<sup>15</sup>

Stories allow us to make sense of the world around us. I grew up with my grandma telling me to “*tapate*” (cover up) whenever men were around. Anzaldúa reflects on this cultural norm and states that “mothers made sure we didn’t walk into a room of brothers or uncles in nightgowns or shorts,” and while the argument can be made that mothers should teach their sons and the men in their lives to not be sexual predators, it is also obvious from these stories that the warnings from mothers, or in my case grandmothers, stem from experience.<sup>16</sup> If storytelling were viewed as valid and not as just gossip I firmly believe my

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<sup>12</sup> bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York: William Morrow, 2001), 209.

<sup>13</sup> Linda Martín Alcoff, *Rape and Resistance: Understanding the Complexities of Sexual Violation* (Medford: Polity, 2018), 110.

<sup>14</sup> Sergio Barrera, interview with author, spring 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Aishah Shahidah Simmons, *Love with Accountability: Digging Up the Roots of Child Sexual Abuse* (Chico: AK Press, 2019), 10.

<sup>16</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 40.

grandmother and mother would have been able to tell their stories sooner. In my case, perhaps my relationship with my mother would be an easier one to navigate.

Storytelling is not solely reserved for the academic nor the writer or journalist. Storytelling is a powerful tool that is accessible by literally everyone. Ken Plummer, author of *Narrative Power*, writes that stories can “*facilitate connections and belonging*, build ‘we’ groups,” establish trust, and community; perhaps rendering storytelling the most fruitful tool one can have at their disposal to combat sexual abuse.<sup>17</sup> Participating in chisme culture, or utilizing the #MeToo movement are all active forms of storytelling that align with *los relatos de vida* as a theoretical concept. Likewise, Levins Morales affirms, all actions from “sitting in front of a bus, laying down in front of a train, stopping work, leaving a school building, blocking the loading of a ship” are forms of storytelling that “contradict official versions meant to uphold the horrible status quo” by exposing sexual violence and disrupting silence surrounding it.<sup>18</sup> Stacy Holman Jones writes that “stories are our *way in* to understanding—to theorizing, and thus to knowing and working to change—our culture and ourselves” which encourages the importance storytelling as a means to heal.<sup>19</sup> It is crucial, then, to consider all forms of storytelling—from chisme to participating in the #MeToo movements—as disruptions of the silence nature surrounding sexual violence.

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<sup>17</sup> Ken Plummer, *Narrative Power: The Struggle of Human Power* (Medford: Polity, 2019), 52.

<sup>18</sup> Aurora Levins Morales, *Medicine Stories: Essays for Radicals* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 45

<sup>19</sup> Stacy Holman Jones, “Living Bodies of Thought: The ‘Critical’ in Critical Autoethnography,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 22, no. 4 (2016): 228-237, 230.

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## Self/Other, Other/Self: Conocimiento as Pedagogical Praxis

Gabriella V. Sanchez, Jesús Jaime-Díaz, and Josie Méndez-Negrete

### Introduction

In Gloria E. Anzaldúa's world, *conocimiento* ensues inside historical, psychocultural, and spiritual processes whereby the self, in interaction with others, begins the necessary transformation toward self-healing. These processes necessarily take place inside the personal and cultural worlds we navigate. In the accounts of her growing up experiences, and her own coming to *conocimiento*, Anzaldúa provides analyses of racism, sexism, and classism inside historical and mythical perspectives, incorporating narratives and counternarratives of colonization and conquest as she recovers the cultural, spiritual, and political significance of her mestiza identity—an identity that merges ancestral roots linking her to the conquest, exposing ties that bind her roots to coloniality and resistance. In “now let us shift...the path of *conocimiento*...inner work, public acts,” Anzaldúa introduces this coming to terms with self, illness, and mortality beginning with an examination of feelings of vulnerability which, when looking inwardly and externalizing trauma pain, serves as a stimulus for the creation of “spiritual/political communities” (574).

Anzaldúa posits that pain is the most powerful agent of transformation and wounds are the openings for digging into and launching that pain into the world, thus shedding potential for victimhood (Vallone 571-72) and opening spaces for *conocimiento*. Its opposite is *desconocimiento* which also co-exists in the inner spaces and places. Failure to acknowledge past harms and hurts sabotages growth

and liberation, precluding our ability to change ourselves so we can change the world.

As the Self comes to awareness and moves to *conocimiento*, relationships with Self and Others improve, and identity formation emerges within the various phases or stages of growth and healing; these are not finite, nor do they signify an end, as Self-identity is fluid and does not move into consciousness until awareness opens spaces to accomplish and re-accomplish processes of becoming. Hurtado, in her case study, rooted in Anzaldúa thought, posits that in the seven stages of *conocimiento* “individuals reconsider and readjust their ideas, motivations, and beliefs, all in the service of moving forward in their lives . . . and continue evolving in a process that is fluid, continues, and never-ending” (1).

The seven spaces may begin at any time. However, Anzaldúa begins with *el arretrato* which takes us from what we see as the familiar and safe, to the liminal and transitional space of *nepantla*—the second stage and the one in which the self exists to engage the other stages. It is in *nepantla* that you can be in the past and present simultaneously, and enter a space of possibilities to consider options in the creation of knowledge, formation of identity, and perceptions of reality through individual and collective knowledge. Coatlicue is the third stage where *desconocimiento* engages despair, self-loathing, and hopelessness empowering the “no” and “not able to” to paralyze us into inaction. It is where the other stages come in and out and engage their pain and disappointments to make meaning of pain and one’s lived experiences, thus gaining a rebirth and a new sense of self. *The call* or *el compromiso* is the fourth phase and it calls us to break free of habits that allow us to escape from realities we must confront, to reconnect with spirit, and undergo change. The fifth phase prompts one to track ongoing circumstances of life, to sift, sort, and symbolize lived experiences to put them into a pattern and story that speaks to our realities—to create new narratives that articulate our own personal realities. We scrutinize and question dominant and ethnic ideologies. Putting all these pieces together, we re-envision the map of the known world, creating a new description of reality and scripting a new story.

In the *blow-up* or sixth space you take your story out into the world, testing it. When we or the world fail to live up to our ideals, our edifice collapses like a house of cards, casting us into conflict with self and others in a war between realities. Disappointed with self and others, angry and then terrified at the depth

of our anger, we swallow our emotions, hold them in, until ready to engage in *spiritual activism* as a way of changing ourself and the world. The seventh stage is the critical point of transformation whereby we engage with ourselves and the world in all our realities to change the world as we change ourselves.

### ***Conocimiento as a Pedagogical Practice***

Conocimiento is an epistemological, methodological, theoretical, and pedagogical approach to learning/teaching and a way to enact relationships with self/other. A process that begins with the retrieval of “family legacies in relation to family origins, language, religion, work, and education, as well as other systemic or structural sites of oppression and domination,” *conocimiento* relies on collaborative, reflexive, and critical spaces in the creation of knowledge (Jaime-Díaz and Méndez-Negrete 2). Below we share pedagogical practices and approaches for using *Conocimiento* as a foundation for learning and teaching, whereby

- There are no right or wrong answers, focus must be on what you know and have experienced.
- Every person carries knowledge and is not an “empty vessel” to be filled by those who have power or are perceived as the ones carrying the knowledge.
- Our emotions, past historical, personal, and family traumas may facilitate or impede learning as we unearth past hurts and violence to our psychological, spiritual, physical, and emotional selves.
- Through *Conocimiento*, learners/teachers gain confidence in challenging power structures and their institutional practices.
- Teacher/Learners engage in the creation of knowledge as subjects of the world whose agency creates possibilities for Self and others.
- Oral and family histories are central to the excavation and retrieval of learner/teacher experiential knowledge.
- Through relational reciprocity in the examination of experience, *Conocimiento* centers and honors dialogical voices embedded in trust.
- Learners/teachers recognize the value of their participation in the creation of knowledge. When and if learners opt out or “pass,” they have the option to share their thoughts, feelings, and reflections at another point.



- Information retrieved from Conocimiento packets is utilized to create essays, videos, musical anthologies, artifacts, archives, and other creative projects.
- Conocimiento creates heightened awareness, critical empathy, and compassion.

### **Teacher Education**

The principles of *conocimiento* provide tools for self-reflection in teacher preparation. Such self-reflection is critical for equipping future teacher educators with critically/culturally responsive pedagogies. This holds sway, particularly in view of changing demographics as we move through the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It has been projected that by the end of the century the majority population in the U.S. will trace their roots to Latina/o America instead of Europe (Gonzalez XV-XVI). Such change in the demographic of the nation-state will require a call to action in equipping teachers with dialogical tools to better understand the communities in which they serve. This begins with a self-reflexive analysis of deficit views internalized and conditioned as a norm during early socialization, particularly because White middle-class teachers often voice an inability to connect with students, let alone empower them through multicultural curriculum (Miranda Lake and Rice 193). This disjuncture derives from and is influenced by archaic factory models of education and a chain of command approach to maximize production between supervisor and worker intergenerationally transmitted as the norm (Sleeter 112). Schools become sorting centers that normalize social inequality and perpetuate social control to maintain the social order (Fallace and Fantozzi 143). Thus, in the following section, we take to task ideology and the insidious and pervasive nature of social reproduction within the context of social structures such as institutions of higher education.

### **Social Reproduction**

Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) argues that privileges and processes are socially reproduced through social stratification, thus legitimizing exploitation through normalized socio-economic functions and institutions (Federici 56). SRT exposes and helps to address how schools do not promote educational equality, but instead reinforce social structures and cultural orders (Collins 34). Deep seeded ideologies are embedded in the various forms of capital that students bring into their educational experience as their frame of reference. Drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's *The Logic of Practice*, we highlight, problematize, and reflect upon

five forms of social capital to address social stratification in the schooling of minoritized students—class, gender, sexuality, ability, race, and racialized ethnicity; we also address the function of teacher preparation in relation to this same stratification (112-121). Such assessments must be done with a meticulous approach in assessing how teacher candidates view diverse communities through 1) Economic Capital, or goods properties and resources; 2) Cultural Capital, or a person's, knowledge and skills that provide status; 3) Human Capital, skills experience and education; 4) Social Capital, core groups of networks that benefit from existing social arrangements; and 5) Symbolic Capital, prestige or recognition ascribed and upheld by the recipient within a culture (Arum, Beattie and Ford 3). We discuss the ways in which these are reproduced in predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

### **Predominately White Institutions**

PWI's are institutions with non-diverse, white students, where anti-racist efforts are often met with resistance. Persistent within such environments is the second-class treatment of minoritized students when they enact agency in raising awareness to the social injustices entrenched within the everyday practices of the institution. Furthermore, faculty of color also struggle against a tidal wave of hostilities as a response to confronting and disrupting modern racism, as illustrated by my own experience. Some examples have been documented in the literature and are not limited to the following: 1) Microaggressions, or unintentional stated forms of prejudice against members of marginalized groups—all Mexicans take our scholarships; 2) Macroaggressions, acts of racism towards all members of a particular race—you are Mexican and got an education there is no reason why they all can't; 3) Micro assaults, deliberate or intentional assaults to hurt the victim—you did alright for being Mexican; 4) Microinvalidations, discredit or minimize the experience of a person—for a former gangster/*vato* you did good for yourself (Azadeh, Boske, and Newcomb 5-9). Such aggression must be examined with an assertive stance to such ideologies to render them obsolete through a clarity of consciousness. Efforts to address aggressions in PWIs are complicated by ethnocentrism. Thus, in the next section, building on Healey, Stepnick and O' Brien's *Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Class: The Sociology of Group Conflict and Change* we address backlash, ethnocentrism, and modern racism (96-102).

## **Ethnocentrism**

Ethnocentrism is the process of judging another culture from the perspective of one's own group or nationality. When such ideology is used as a frame of reference people compare cultures through religion, behavior, language, customs, norms, and material resources; the comparison is value laden (Healey et al. 121-123). Classrooms at PWIs have demonstrated how students from affluent white middle-class backgrounds judge minoritized students from positions of privilege, and minoritized students have to learn how to defend themselves from being devalued. This creates an intercultural conflict of misunderstanding. Such misunderstandings have significant pedagogical impacts: internalized biases of competency, and assumptions that teachers should raise or lower expectations of students (based on their own cultural assumptions). As such, it becomes vital in teacher preparation to reject such ideologies which many may have internalized.

Examples of internalized biases of competency are evident in language ideologies, especially the acquisition of English language through bilingual education, attitudes and assumptions regarding accents, and the acquisition of an academic language to acquire content. Such biases and ideologies can exist concurrently with anti-immigrant sentiment disdain for the working class, and an ignorance of the contributions that immigrant workers make to U.S. society. Thus, the privilege that comes from obtaining an education, and in relation, a discourse of whiteness, is normalized within social structures as a means for social acceptance; this marginalizes minoritized groups devaluing their lived experiences within U.S. schools (Cushing-Leubner 136).

## **Selective Perception**

*Selective perceptions* are preconceived expectations that majority educators and learners project onto minority groups of people; these can also be the result of a failure to be mindful of the processes by which educators and learners harbor implicit biases about other groups. Such perceptions tend to reinforce stereotypes based on race, ethnicity gender, class and sexual orientation (Healey et al. 83-84). Yet, addressing selective perceptions brings with it challenges. When such issues are pressed with an assertive stance, white middle class students often raise their defenses. Such students also resist empirical evidence that challenges their views. White students' justification for resisting

derives from folk theories about language acquisition, such as deficit views of minoritized communities, which are usually acquired through deficit/popular media representations. On the flip side of the coin, minoritized students may assume that white middle class students have everything because they have material wealth, and thus face no challenges in their lives. These assumptions create boundaries between students along multiple spaces and places where they segregate into what they know.

### **Social Distance**

*Social distance* is the degree of intimacy a person is willing to accept with members of other groups. This is highly influenced through socialization and social location within a community: close kinships by marriage, members of a club, friends, neighbors, employment or occupation, common citizenship, or social class (Healey et al. 91-106). In the U.S., legacies of segregation have created and reinforced a lack of understanding or unfamiliarity between groups; this exacerbates degrees of difference and makes acceptance less likely. In the classroom this is experienced with reluctance to socialize, avoidance, or reluctance to meet and work on small group projects with each other. Within this context of constructed and internalized social reproduction within institutions of higher education, *conocimiento* offers a cooperative and collaborative pedagogical approach in the creation of knowledge.

### **Critical Family Histories/Pedagogical *conocimientos* in Teacher Preparation**

In countering socially reproduced ideologies, education pedagogues, such as Christine Sleeter, have argued in support of engaging critical reflection in relation to early socialization (Sleeter “Critical Family History, Identity, and Historical Memory 12, 115). Critical reflection requires students to engage critical family histories to deconstruct and problematize privilege, power, and difference. Chicana feminist scholar Josie Méndez-Negrete has argued that pedagogical *conocimientos* are a self-reflexive methodology that elicits the retrieval of family legacies and holds the power to unearth internalized traumas and implicit prejudices from early socialization (228). This approach has been invaluable in the preparation of teacher candidates, as it serves as a dialogical tool in creating a community of learners.

Méndez-Negrete proposes a four-prong approach to pedagogical *conocimientos*, which utilizes the retrieval of family legacies in relation to origin, language, work, and education. For example, by exploring their immigration legacy, students come to understand the struggle of immigrant groups within epochs in human history. When language is analyzed, students examine the ways in which monolingual language ideologies and language policies have caused language loss. Exploring legacies of work challenges meritocracy and rugged individualism; students come to understand the sacrifices made by previous generations, which enables them to understand their social class position. This facilitates a shift from awareness to consciousness as members of the working class with the capacity to engage in social change.

When students retrieve education legacies, they learn that individual guilt is neither historically accurate nor pragmatically useful. What is needed is the responsibility to act in the spirit of social justice for the common good. Students come to understand the difficulty of the immigrant experience, especially within a culture that expects them to become generic Americans by losing their language and their culture. In relation, they learn about the difficulty in acquiring a language and struggling against language ideologies. Thus, pedagogical *conocimientos* has the power to instill a clarity of consciousness in bridging relationships by cultivating a critical empathy and compassion, making educational equity a reality as we prepare future teacher educators to be of service to our communities (Jaime-Díaz & Méndez-Negrete 2020 1).

### **From Student to Teacher/Learner: Conocimiento in a US WOC Classroom**

To prepare, I (Gabriella Sanchez) revisited Gloria E. Anzaldúa's essay "now let us shift. . . the path of *conocimiento*. . . inner work, public acts." Almost a decade after I first read the piece, I did not expect memories and emotions from my first reading of her text to resurface. The first time I read "now let us shift" I was an undergraduate student in my first women's studies course, with my first prof who identified as a Chicana feminist. She introduced me to Anzaldúa, Moraga, Pérez, Lorde, and the Combahee River Collective (to name some of many WOC we read that semester); when we read "now let us shift," it was the first time I had been asked to theorize the complexities, contradictions, and possibilities found in the commitment to heal. Later, as a graduate student in Josie Méndez-Negrete's class, *conocimiento* was employed as a theory, method, and

practice that utilized ancestral legacies, self-reflectiveness, and self-awareness. To disrupt a history of Anglo-conformity and Americanization that dehumanizes people of color, we focused on our relationships with self/other (self and others) as sites of knowledge (Jaime-Díaz and Méndez-Negrete 1).

Equipped with knowledge of ourselves and our historical legacies, and through non-hierarchical and reciprocal learning relationships, *conocimiento* empowers teacher/learners to grow the critical consciousnesses necessary to name, examine, and contest colonial, patriarchal, imperial, homophobic, classist, and racist ideologies and systems; in the process *conocimiento* opens possibilities to recreate a sense of self and identity that exists outside of what has been assigned, imposed, or internalized. Thus, building on Anzaldúa and Méndez-Negrete, below, I discuss the ways I practice as a Chicana feminist educator in my US Women of Color (US WOC) course at Texas Woman's University. I focus on how I engage pedagogical *conocimiento* with intersectional thought to unpack the following core concepts and structures: patriarchy, settler colonialism, imperialism, and racial and gender ideologies.

### **Conocimiento: Day 1**

Texas Woman's University (TWU) is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in Denton, Texas, a city with a population that is close to eighty percent white. US WOC is a junior level women's studies course that centers histories, theories, cultures, and consciousness of women of color. In a classroom of predominantly Black and Brown women, all course content is authored by Black and Brown women who share alternative ways of knowing and being as well as methods of resistance that they, for generations, they have relied upon.

On the first day of class, I begin by recognizing our families/chosen families and each one of us as teacher/learners, reaffirming that we are carriers of knowledge, and invested in and capable of creating knowledge. For many, this is the first time that the intellectual, activist, and spiritual labor of women of color – including their own mothers, grandmothers, aunties, and other matriarchs – is acknowledged. It is also the first-time teacher/learners have a syllabus that mirrors themselves. In a classroom of predominantly Black and Brown women, the course content is authored by Black and Brown women who share alternative ways of

knowing and being as well as methods of resistance that they, for generations, they have relied upon.

After we review the syllabus, everyone, including me, receives a Conocimiento Packet. This packet asks questions about the self and four generations of maternal and paternal ancestral lines. As we answer prompts about ethnicity, race, gender, class (work history), education history, and language, intersectional thinking becomes a method to analyze and understand identity formation. I also use my own Conocimiento Packet to facilitate my introduction. With this approach, I encourage a sense of relationality and provide a preview of how teacher/learners will learn to engage their legacies to create historical narratives. For example, I share that I identify as Chicana and never learned Spanish, explaining that my loss of language is linked to my parents' educational experiences in the 1950s and 1960s: "English Only" was aggressively enforced and if they were caught speaking Spanish, "educators" punished them with physical violence. When I disclose my family's economic status, I discuss my paternal and maternal work history and emphasize that despite patriarchy's earned wages from "official jobs," domestic labor carried out by matriarchs was and continues to be unpaid and unrecognized.

Conocimiento Packets are not graded; however, I ask they be complete (or be as close as possible to complete) before the second week of the course, since we will spend the next three weeks examining patriarchy, settler colonialism, imperialism, and racial and gender ideologies – harmful ways of thinking and being that have been embedded into current systems and structures. Beginning with patriarchy, I explain how *conocimiento* guides my teaching around these concepts, makes visible the real, physical harm these core concepts sustain, and helps teacher/learners identify the ways their family histories expose injustices imposed by these concepts.

### **Patriarchy**

bell hooks defines patriarchy as a political-social system that inherently endows males with the power to dominate and rule over the weak, especially women, through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence (1). Theorizing from her own experiences in a violent, patriarchal household, hooks reminds us that men, women, and all genders have a role in reproducing

patriarchy. This is the case when we blindly obey patriarchy's rule that promotes emotionlessness: men are rewarded if they do not cry, and everyone is disciplined to maintain control over emotions or risk punishment. All teacher/learners experience patriarchy. Acquisition of theory and language enables learners/teachers to discuss the impact of maintaining patriarchal thinking in how we understand ourselves in relationship to others. Through mapping patriarchy in their lives and in the dominant society, the challenges and rewards that come with communicating feelings, moving through them begins to make sense (hooks 5).

### **Settler Colonialism**

Colonization did not end, and settler colonizers never left what is now known as the United States. As such, we begin the semester by naming settler colonialist structures *upon* which the US and other nations were “founded,” and *into* which we are all born (Arvin et. al 9). Through Native feminist lenses, we learn how, as a settler colonial nation-state, the U.S. maintains control through the murder and exploitation of Indigenous, Black, Chicana/o/x, and other communities of color, how heteropatriarchy molds our current understanding of the “traditional” family structure, “proper” sexualities, and gender norms, and the ways we have internalized settler colonial ideologies in our daily lives and relationships (Arvin et. al 12, 14). I ask us to consider how a nation within an Indigenous framework challenges the settler colonialist nation state. Instead of a nation-state that is contingent on exploitation and individualism (capitalism), how could our realities change if we center the wellness of ourselves, families, and communities (Betasamosake Simpson)?

### **Imperialism**

An understanding of settler colonialism facilitates discussions of imperialism and allows an introduction to Tuhiwai Smith's notion of “the imperial imagination.” The Imperial imagination enabled European nations to imagine new worlds, new wealth, and new possessions as theirs to “discover” and control. Moreover, imperial nations promoted scientific racism and the importance of economic expansion to justify their actions (Tuhiwai Smith 63). As such, military power driven by capitalism yielded and assembled a system of control under imperialism. This system enforced one way of learning, understanding, and being (Tuhiwai Smith 63-64).



Once we establish a solid understanding of imperial imagination, how it functions to sustain inequality, and how it continues to shape both formal education and our understanding of ourselves, we, as a class, are ready to apply the concept to our lives and learning. Teacher/learners are asked to imagine themselves within an imperial imaginary, premised on systems of race, ethnicity, gender, and class. This allows us to examine processes of how we, as “the other,” sustain those in power. New language surrounding settler colonialism, patriarchy, and imperialism allows us to center the intersections of race and gender in our final core concept.

### **Racial and Gender Ideologies**

In “Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder:’ Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770,” Jennifer Morgan mapped and analyzed travel accounts by European “explorers” and how their discourse produced descriptions and images that would later be used to justify the enslavement of and violence toward Black and Native women. Based on observations of “unwomanly behavior,” women’s breasts, and childbirth, they described Black and Native women as “people of beastly living” with “unnatural reproductive behavior.” They claimed that women did not “enjoy” children and, in those instances where the traveler believed the women did not want children, they linked such desire to savagery (183). To travelers, African women’s’ breasts were “barbaric” and evidence of “copulating with apes,” (Atkins qtd. In Morgan 189). Lastly, because children were delivered “with little or no labor,” travelers claimed that African and Native women “did not feel pain” (191). Through the publication and circulation of these European/imperial male writings and descriptions, Morgan argues, the way people were taught to view and understand African and Native women – as monstrous, not human, incapable of feeling pain – came to inform ideologies, images, and systems such as the medical system. They continue to inform racial ideologies today (Chakraborty).

### **Accountability and Action**

Conocimiento packets are not tools for collecting data, however they reaffirm increased self/other awareness. They allow learners/teachers to demonstrate a commitment to rejecting patriarchal, settler colonial imperial, and racial and gendered ways of knowing and existing. They also provide participants

with an opportunity to actively engage in anti-patriarchal, decolonial, anti-white supremacist knowledge production. Participation in the course ignites renewed appreciation for knowledge through culturally informed historical narratives that unearth our family and community histories and experiences, providing us a choice to define who we are and who we want to become.

## **Conclusion**

Through *conocimiento* as an epistemological process, we create spaces whereby learners/teachers critically examine their respective legacies by sharing a living history that provides cultural, social, and political frames of reference for understanding individual and collective experiences. This process unearths family and community knowledge, yielding a space that generates collective analysis, thus allowing learners/teachers to experience the ways in which oppressed racialized ethnic groups engage cultural hegemony in the United States.

Those of us who rely on *conocimiento* as an epistemological and pedagogical approach to knowledge argue that knowledge is relational, mutualistic, and interactive. We urge learners/ teachers to recognize that their emotions are implicated in the creation of knowledge. As such they must exercise willingness to share how and in what ways the material under examination has decentered or illuminated them. This necessarily calls learners/teachers to rely on their agency to demonstrate respective subjectivities as active learners in the creation of knowledge not as objective processes of meeting certain expectations, but gaining knowledge in all its complexity, particularly acknowledging the emotional labor and cost that knowing and not knowing inside the academy brings to those who have long been excluded from being active and engaged participants. Thus, we must reject the notion that the only way to gain knowledge is based on who has the right to know, what can be known, who opposes antiquated and colonizing systems of knowing. As we engage in the creation of knowledge, we must rely on our senses and use ourselves as conduits of the production of knowledge. Toward that end we argue that *conocimiento* facilitates:

- An examination of various structures of inequality and domination and the ways in which these maintain or impose hierarchical power relations that keep people of color subordinated.

- Multiple ways to make visible and problematize sociocultural arrangements that keep people of Mexican descent or minoritized people of color oppressed.
- The ongoing creation of historical narratives; historical analyses of prior generation's experiences; and analysis of and articulation of student's educational and employment legacies, and ethnic notions of their experiences.

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## Pandemic Pivoting within Academia and Activism: An Exploration of New Forms of Classroom Pedagogies and Latinx/Chicanx Scholarship

Margaret Cantú-Sánchez, Ph.D.

The years of 2020-2022 are rife with significant changes, including a pandemic, social unrest, increased political divisions, and renewed interest in anti-racism scholarship and activism. Given that NACCS will be celebrating 50 years of activist scholarship it is important to note the significant changes many Chicane/Latine scholars, like myself, have endured in relation to our scholarship, activism, and classroom pedagogies. One of the major changes I found myself encountering was the almost desperate desire to balance my “usual” teaching themes, like those focusing on social justice, alongside the need to be flexible and compassionate during this trying time. At the same time, my scholarship and academic work seemed to steadily increase and become more important as mainstream society noticed some of the societal issues, such as systemic racism, structural inequality (CRT), and mental health, which many of us have long explored in our own research. With this paper I seek to examine the ways in which I, as a Chicane scholar and professor, sought to and continue to alter my classroom pedagogies and scholarship to reflect the significant changes facing society. Most notably, pivoting to an online platform allowed for many freedoms like attending and participating in more conferences, symposiums, and webinars. At the same time, I had to develop new strategies like employing the use of applications like Padlet to help my students stay connected all while trying to encourage civic engagement. I argue that Chicane scholar Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of the path of *conocimiento* and current anti-racism theories like those of Ibram X. Kendi offer an important guide to navigating the numerous *arrebatos*

presented in our lives as Chicanx/Latinx scholars and activists living through a worldwide pandemic, while helping engage in consciousness-raising and spiritual activism.

In Gloria Anzaldúa’s seminal essay, “now let us shift...the path of *conocimiento*...inner work, public acts” she chronicles a pivotal moment in self-reflection and awareness through what she describes as *the path of conocimiento*: el arrebatado, nepantla, the Coatlicue state, the crossing, putting Coyolxauhqui together (question and re-envision), revealing your story to the world, and transformation. Anzaldúa explains that sometimes in our lives we may be confronted with life experiences which call on us to reflect on our life experiences and positionality in our world. With the rise of a global pandemic, Anzaldúa’s words regarding *conocimiento* are more important than ever, she explains “[w]e stand at a major threshold in the extension of consciousness, caught in the remolinos (vortices) of systemic change across all fields of knowledge” (“now...” 541).

While Anzaldúa’s essay discusses the notion of the path of *conocimiento* in relation to her own subjective experiences with health issues, discrimination, sexism, and racism, in *Light in the Dark: Luz en lo Oscuro*, she expands her theory by applying it to the global arrebatado we were thrust into during 9/11. It is this expansion of, and application of, the *path of conocimiento*, that is most useful in understanding the pandemic in terms of its devastating impact on us globally. Anzaldúa describes 9/11 as

un arrebatamiento con la fuerza de una hacha. Carlos Castaneda’s Don Juan would call such times the day the world stopped, but the world doesn’t so much stop as it cracks. What cracked is our perception of the world, how we relate to it, how we engage with it. Afterward we view reality differently—we see through its rendijas (holes) to the illusion of consensual reality. The world as we know it ‘ends.’ We experience a radical shift in perception, otra forma de ver. (Keating 16)

Much like 9/11, the COVID pandemic can also be referred to as “un arrebatamiento,” a significant event that cracked our perception of the world. Because of this cracking of our world, and all we knew prior to the pandemic, we were and are forced to contend with the reality revealed in the “holes” left behind by such an atrocity. When the pandemic first began, this global arrebatado forced the world to shift into the perpetual unknown, thereby thrusting us into this new



stage of humanity similar to the stage of *conocimiento* Anzaldúa calls *nepantla*. In this phase, one is transferred into an in between space after experiencing a traumatizing event; a person is no longer who they were prior to the trauma. Anzaldúa describes *nepantla* as “...the site of transformation, the place where different perspectives come into conflict and where you question the basic ideas, tenets, and identities inherited from your family, your education, and your different cultures” (“now...” 549). With the rise of the pandemic, many of us were forced into a space where we had no choice but to contemplate new perspectives of life, this is true for those of us in academia. Not only were we forced to consider how we might pivot our pedagogical strategies to an online platform, but we also began to question the ways in which we might continue to resist the social injustices plaguing our society, all while thinking about how our identities have changed since the pandemic.

In contemplating our various reactions to the pandemic, I must also note that though many people believe it is over, and try continue their lives as if nothing has changed, the pandemic changed our communities, globally. I recently attended an event at my institution, one of the first with a room full of people half-masked, half-not, focusing on the issue of transforming Hispanic Serving Institutions. The event speaker, Dr. Gina Garcia was phenomenal, enthusiastic, unapologetic, and clearly devoted to institutional change. The discussion which ensued was timely since we continue to be immersed in this *nepantla* stage—between thinking about who we once were as academics and people and who we want to be. Garcia urged us to consider the ways we might better serve our populations, and for me this struck a chord because of my experiences in these last two semesters. Though we have returned to “normal” academic business, we are all back on campus, still masked, the ramifications of the pandemic continue to reverberate on my campus.

We do, indeed, have a “new normal.” St. Mary’s University is a small HSI (Hispanic Serving Institution) with half the population composed of commuters and the other half “traditional” residents. Though we have returned to campus, students are clearly struggling. Current research from the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) indicates that Hispanic communities are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, “[m]ore than a year into the pandemic, Latinos in the United States say COVID-19 has harmed them and their loved ones in many ways. About half say a family member or close friend has been hospitalized or died from the coronavirus, and a similar share that they or

someone in their household has lost a job or taken a pay cut during the pandemic” (Noe-Bustamante, “For U.S. Latinos”). This is clearly the case for many our students at St. Mary’s, both in the midst of the pandemic and as part of the aftermath. Numerous students have shared their traumatic stories of parents and grandparents dying or becoming seriously ill because of COVID or their experiences of maintaining attendance and good grades while holding down two part time jobs to help with family expenses.

To better understand the “post-pandemic” world we are currently in we must look back to the lockdown. When the pandemic emerged and surged in March of 2020, the world stopped; this included higher education. The ramifications were dire, hospitals were overwhelmed, parents now had double duty of caring for and instructing their children as well as maintaining their own careers, and people from vulnerable and traditionally marginalized communities were devastated with both job loss, and a lack of safe spaces.

For a moment, educators seemed stuck, until we pieced together a “plan” to “go remote.” From April 2020 to May 2021 classes and life in general shifted to online communication. Initially, the reaction was one of relief because we desired a sense of normalcy. Students were delighted to communicate in some way with others, at least some were. Others were still struggling financially or medically, sometimes navigating class while working, others caring for children while attempting to listen to their classmates, and still others had difficulty in shifting to an online platform. Despite the seeming “solution” of offering online education alternatives, this also presented problems for both students and professors,

[d]efficiencies in teacher training become apparent under COVID-19. Although a select few educators are familiar with and comfortable with digital delivery (and are able to provide rich classrooms experiences in a purely virtual platform), the vast majority of educators confronted the prospect of converting their classrooms from fully in-person to virtual environments stumbled badly.” (Shrier 67)

I was one of the lucky few who had taught online courses prior to the pandemic and had even been introduced to Zoom long before the software became widely available. Despite this familiarity with online platforms, converting entire courses which were traditionally instructed in-person was challenging. At times many of us were simply in “survival mode.”

But something deeper was also occurring; we were at a point when we felt worldwide despair and hopelessness. This moment is similar to what Anzaldúa explains as a new shift in the path of *conocimiento* “[w]hen overwhelmed by the chaos caused by living between stories you break down, descend into the third space, the Coatlicue depths of despair, self-loathing, and hopelessness” (“now...” 544). Though we were going about our daily activities, we did so in a daze. Somehow, we had to find ways to ask our students to remain connected in our classes, all while balancing the effects of the pandemic on our lives. In this moment, the only thing to do was to acknowledge and embrace the Coatlicue state and the depression that comes with it, to deny it would only increase our descent into hopelessness. As Anzaldúa notes it is important to

...name, acknowledge, mourn, and grieve your losses and violations instead of trying to retain what you’ve lost through a nostalgic attempt at preservation, you learn not just to survive but to imbue that survival with new meaning. Through activist and creative work you help heal yourself and others. (Keating 88)

While in this Coatlicue state we often took time in class acknowledge the ongoing suffering, discussed ways we could help each other by getting vaccinated, wearing masks, and social distancing. As a class and as individuals we used our discussions of books like Américo Paredes’ *George Washington Gómez*, Toni Morrison’s *Paradise*, Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*, and others that called our attention to social injustice in our world and in our histories. In our research projects we made central the need to improve our world, all the while acknowledging the call to action to do more for ourselves and humanity.

One of the main ways I sought to help us bridge our worlds and selves in this challenging time was to consider Anzaldúa’s fourth space of the “path of *conocimiento*” where a call to action, to embrace a crossing is embraced. In this space, we accept our in-between state, but also ask questions so that we might move forward. To cross over, we must “recognize and come to terms with the manipulative, vindictive, secretive shadow-beast within” (“now...” 557). That is exactly what we pursued in our classes. Though we were online, we acknowledged the elephant in the room: the pandemic. We talked about its toll on our daily lives, we continued to focus on the literature at hand, and I found ways to connect what we were learning about to what was happening in our world around us. It did us no good to avoid or ignore the current events outside our

homes. Students responded well via Padlets (online software) which helped them discuss/answer comments/questions in real-time using “posts,” images, video clips, and find new ways to interact with one another. Often our conversations focused on major themes of the class including how to balance one’s cultural identity with Americanization and assimilation, while also addressing the impact we have on each other based on the decisions we make in our own lives. Students enjoyed finding appropriate gifs and images highlighting their identities and sense of humor allowing them opportunities to connect, albeit remotely.

It was also necessary to acknowledge the heightened social unrest related to politics, activism, and antiracism efforts. While we were still online, we continued to use Padlet, Canvas, Zoom, and webinars to share our thoughts on Black Lives Matter, the implications of COVID on minority groups, and ways we might engage in activism and civic awareness. Though we were not physically meeting, I chose to implement some activities including supplementary resources and guides identifying social justice issues like antiracism, systemic racism, and sexism. Students were also asked to produce an action plan to consider ways they might actively participate in responding to such social injustices, including volunteering at organizations like RAICES, Interfaith Welcome Coalition, American Gateways, and taking part in online and in-person protests. Though we often had difficult conversations, students were prepared for these discussions because they were directly impacted. I also made sure to begin each course with a community agreement in which students dictated how we would treat one another in class as we had these difficult conversations. This was created using a Padlet posting, which allowed students to return to the agreement whenever they felt the need to.

While my students engaged in this crossing and questioning stage in our new classroom space, I also experienced a major shift in my work and activism. While people were attending rallies in person in response to the atrocities perpetuated against George Floyd and others, I took my activist work online to address the social injustice of racism in the hopes of engaging in spiritual activism and healing. Anzaldúa defines healing “...as taking back the scattered energy and soul loss wrought by woundings. Healing means using the life force and strength that comes with *el ánimo* to act positively on one’s own and on others’ behalf.’ Often a wound provokes an urgent yearning for wholeness and provides the ground to achieve it” (Keating 89). One such gathering I organized was a virtual Black Lives Matter reading and rally sponsored by our English department. The

St. Mary's community was invited to engage in readings, poetry, and discussions about systemic racism and Black Lives Matter. I felt called on to do something more than my typical teachings and sought healing beyond my own anger with racism and racists, thus I asked our community to confront the wounds of racism and use that consciousness to grow and call on each other to act.

My approach to navigating our Coatlicue state was multipronged. In addition to my work with the reading and rally, I participated in webinars on systemic racism, and worked with others to see the implementation of an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at our institution. We formed various committees to address the arduous work of considering how we might specifically address the serving-ness aspect of our Hispanic Serving Institution. And I continued my work with my Mexican American Studies Symposium by focusing on the theme of Antiracism and Latinx Cultures and Communities—all done online. The community and students responded with eagerness and interest in tackling how we might implement more antiracism efforts in our institutions and daily lives. Presentations ran the gambit focusing on domestic violence, discrimination against women of color in STEM, gaps in historical narratives, and discrimination faced by people of color in medicine. The presentations and conversations served to directly confront racial inequality as both Anzaldúa and Ibram X. Kendi call on us to do.

Two years later, the work that began in the midst of the pandemic continues. In the classroom, I continue to find ways to adjust and be flexible, while focusing on ways to combat social injustice in my own activism and academic work. Both my students and I have found daily life to be a struggle as we continue on this path of *conocimiento*, shifting between the various stages of *nepantla*, *Coatlicue*, the crossing, and questioning/re-envisioning. Despite the acknowledgement that working on ourselves and our positionality in an ever-changing world is necessary, we continue to struggle. Recent research indicates that we are not alone at St. Mary's University. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* devoted numerous discussions to the disconnect university students are often feeling, “[s]tudents seem to have lost their sense of connection with the university and university community, and their sense of purpose in attending” (McMurtie, “A ‘Stunning’ Level...”). Those students who are able to show up find themselves experiencing anxiety, depression, and burnout leading to the question of how can we continue to engage our students especially regarding heavy topics like racism, consciousness-raising, and social justice? Further questions remain regarding how

we can reach transformation via spiritual activism and antiracism when we are still locked in a battle to fully engage with one another.

To begin to address these questions we must first recognize the individual and communal problems we are encountering. Anzaldúa explains that a new perspective is required once we have encountered an *arrebato*, she specifically proposes "...a new perspective on imagining and a new relationship to the imagination, to healing, and to shamanic spirituality. Art, reading, and writing are image-making practices that shape and transform what we able to imagine and perceive" (Anzaldúa 44). To gain this new perspective in the literature classroom, I invite students to contemplate how literature and current events have impacted them. In contemplating these connections, like the impact that COVID has had on one's family, and interactions with classmates and professors, students have noted feeling burned out, anxious, and in distress. At the same time, they express a desire to engage in transforming themselves and their world especially in regard to social injustices.

In helping students to contemplate their positionality in the world and how they might help change themselves and their world, students can learn how to recover their agency in the classroom and beyond. As noted by Professor Mallory Bower is discussing his course, "Who Do You Think You Are?" such courses are successful because "...students were encouraged to have serious conversations on complicated topics, like abortion laws, race, or sexuality. It also gave them a sense of agency by, for example, devoting class time to discussing how to write their legislator or register to vote" (McMurtie "A 'Stunning' Level..."). Students in my courses use community action plans to help them decide which organizations and non-profits they would like to work with and are encouraged to engage in both traditional and innovative research, and non-traditional art projects focusing on deconstructing their identity. Each assignment gives students the chance to assert control of their story and share it with the world as both Anzaldúa and Kendi do.

For Kendi, his wife's and his own encounters with cancer propel him to seek a transformational reality, one where he takes his words and story out into the world to engage in meaningful action, hence his founding of the Antiracism Research and Policy Center. Kendi's decision to create the policy center is only the first step to enact real change, the objectives of the Center are at the heart of his spiritual activism. Kendi argues that the Center's purpose is to

Admit racial inequity is a problem of bad policy, not bad people.  
 Identify racial inequity in all its intersections and manifestations.  
 Investigate and uncover the racist policies causing racial inequity.  
 Invent or find antiracist policy that can eliminate racial inequity.  
 Figure out who or what group has the power to institute antiracist  
 policy. (232)

With these specific objectives in mind, Kendi realizes his purpose in examining race and racism through his own lived experienced and those of his fellow black community members, signaling an innovative approach to racism. It is this kind of approach that can help move us forward in an era where the definition of racist is no longer discernible and often ignored or denied by racists themselves.

The refusal to recognize racism in society, or to appropriate the language that was developed to fight racism continues to shape our reality. While some hoped that the Covid crisis would ameliorate the backlash of the early twenty-first century, it did not. This is firmly demonstrated in the recent laws targeting minority voters, critical race theory, and the censorship of literature written about and by authors of color and LGBTQ writers. What Kendi demonstrates for us here, through his path of *conocimiento*, is that we too must embark on our own journeys of transformation and spiritual activism. We can do this by acknowledging the difficulties we continue to endure, while placing ourselves firmly in the midst of these ongoing battles. Most recently my own class, *Women of Color, Memoir as Writing and Resistance* course sponsored a discussion highlighting the book banning and censorship in K-12 education in Texas and across the United States. Many of these graduate students are teachers themselves, and they demonstrated ways that they are fighting such censorship and how students themselves have engaged in their own resistance by signing up for *biblioteca* (an online library in San Antonio) so that they may read the books their schools will not allow them to, in this way students seem to be engaging in the kind of spiritual activism and transformation Anzaldúa calls us to embrace.

Anzaldúa explains that this point of transformation happens [w]hen a change occurs [in] your consciousness (awareness of your sense of self and your response to self, others, and surroundings) becomes cognizant that it has a point of view, and the ability to act from choice. This knowing/knower is always with you but is displaced by the ego and its perspectives. (“now...” 569)

For Anzaldúa spiritual activism begins with *conocimiento* and relates back to the experiences of racism and sexism she encountered growing up and living in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. She likens the idea of coming to consciousness as a necessary one, like taking care of “growing things and the land” (*Borderlands* 113). In the same way, one must take care of themselves to move to the next stage of transformation. Such transformations regarding identity and systemic racism emerge “[w]hen you relate to others, not as parts, problems, or useful commodities ... when you give up investment in your point of view and recognize the real situation free of projections—not filtered through your habitual defensive preoccupations (Anzaldúa, “now...” 569). In the case of systemic racism and the experience of racial discrimination, Anzaldúa notes that one of the first steps to addressing these issues is to seek out empathy, understanding, compassion. To consider another person’s perspective, their opinion, and how their history has impacted why they have formed such opinions and developed such ideologies allows for a better connection to others and room for transformation. In addition to engaging and encouraging activism within the classroom and beyond, students are also inspired through the utilization of Anzaldúa’s path of *conocimiento* and the stage of sharing their stories with the world. Specifically, sharing such stories allows for the opportunity to engage in “bridging.” In discussing Anzaldúa’s notion of bridging” and individual and global transformations, Mohammad Tamdgidi notes that

...bridging is dialogic and assumes the existence and equal value of ‘banks’ of knowledge on two (or more) sides of a conversation. Bridging is about sharing knowledges that are also independently growing. Bridging involves further dialogue arising from inner conversations. How could one truly appreciate the labors of another if one has not already tasted their liberating effects. (Keating and González-López 218)

For students to adopt the bridging strategy they should be encouraged to share their own stories and life experiences. In particular, students in my Memoir class were tasked with creating their own multi-media memoirs where they contemplated and confronted the wounds they had encountered during the pandemic and beyond. They were able to use these memoirs to reflect on themselves, their problems, their fears, and social concerns, including issues of identity, familial legacies, confrontations with family, and other social justice issues, to encourage conversation with classmates and others. In this way, the



assignment provides agency and a space for students to serve as bridges to transformational change in our world as Kendi and Anzaldúa do in their own writings.

Just as Kendi recognizes that sometimes he too adheres to racist assumptions, Anzaldúa too recognizes the fallibility she and all of us in relation to structural inequality because it is embedded in our everyday institutions and reality. This recognition can lead to dialogue and transformational change. Thus, the only way to reject former ways of knowing is to move outside of old narratives, beyond them. Karina Céspedes notes this call to move beyond the boundaries of former ways of knowing our world, requires "...facing up to the real effects such identities produce, the personal privileges one may gain from them alongside the tragic limitations these categories create" (Céspedes 76).

Though Anzaldúa and Kendi offer ways in which to engage in transformational thinking, there is still much work to be done. Students are still struggling with everyday life and we, as educators, must continually adapt and learn to be flexible in a world that is consistently changing. Epidemiologists further believe that many more pandemics will occur in the coming years and

[w]ith the effects of climate change accelerating and becoming more pronounced, we may see widespread environmental disruptions (i.e. superstorms, extreme heat and cold spells) of schooling. Global policymakers should be thinking ahead on how to mandate emergency response planning, including long-term, alternative options for learning. (Shrier 66-67)

With this information in mind it seems both Anzaldúa's and Kendi's approaches to transformational thinking must continue to take center stage if we are to succeed in helping our students achieve consciousness about their own identities and positionality in the world, and in finding ways to enact social changes. Furthermore, our former ways of thinking and doing things in academia are a thing of a past, gone are the days of dismissing student's mental health issues, late work policies, and strict adherence to attendance. These established norms cannot exist in a world where we struggle daily to identify ourselves and place in an ever-changing world. The question remains: Which stage of the path of *conocimiento* are we in now? Globally, we are wavering in this *nepantla* stage, this in-betweenness, poised and ready for transformation, but until we take the

time to consider the effects the pandemic had and continues to have on us, we will remain in this state.

As we continue to face new global arrebatos, it is important to recognize Anzaldúa's path of *conocimiento* and how it might be used in our own personal lives, within the classroom, our activism, and beyond. The path of *conocimiento* is an especially useful tool to utilize within academia because it asks us to contemplate the ways in which we might confront, embrace, and resist the effects of the global pandemic as well as overlapping issues like systemic racism, mental health issues, political division, and social unrest. Especially relevant are the stages of *conocimiento* in which we are called to question our positionality in an ever-changing world, and sharing those experiences with humanity. Critical literature courses are especially useful in asking students to contemplate the experiences of others, while calling on us to share our own stories in an effort to 'bridge' our lives with one another. In the end, 'bridging' may serve as significant factor in reaching positive, transformational change for ourselves and our world.

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## Conceptualizing academic *putería* at the 2022 NACCS conference: A critical reflection on the WAPs, DAPs, and flops.

Tess Pantoja Perez and Olga Alvina Estrada

The purpose of this paper is to engage in a critical reflection of our experiences as two of three co-presenters on a panel presentation introducing the concept of academic *putería* through personal narrative, delivered in virtual form at the 2022 NACCS conference. With the help of the audio/video recorded session, the authors offer an abridged transcript of the preceding, giving prominence to the transformative impressions, feelings, emotions, and ideas that formulated the radically queer and provocative notion of academic *putería*. Contrary to our expectations, collaborating with cisgender, heterosexual Chicanas and Latinas in the academy is easier said than done. In what has become a habit for the authors, we conclude with an exercise in critical self-reflection as a means of examining our own role in failed collaborations, our susceptibility to the academic seduction of belonging, and the many strengths and vulnerabilities that we embody as queer, first-generation, and neurodivergent students from historically excluded communities. This article, therefore, represents our desire to shift beyond anti-erotic, DAP (dry as pussy) collegial relations towards more equitable and pleasurable WAP (wet ass pussy) connections with future collaborators. But first, we offer a brief overview of a few key terms that are commonly engaged in our repertoire of linguistic *putasos*.

### **Fundamental Key Terms**

We coined the phrase, academic *putería* to symbolize gendered labor exploitation and the lack of agency over our bodies and intellectual property in the academy. In this way, *putería*, a Spanish word that translates to acts of prostitution, or whoring, characterized the shady and not-so-empowering side of working in higher education. We later expanded on the idea of academic *putería* as a phrase that represents both the shady *and* the empowering side of the

everyday work experiences of QTBIPOC students, staff, and faculty. Academic *putería* is derived from the labors of the mind, body, and spirit which are commodified and mined for their wealth. From this perspective, we regard academic *putería* as a means of survival within an individualistic, merit-based, capitalistic, neoliberal institution.

Formed by the first letters of the words, wet ass pussy, WAP is an acronym made popular by rappers Cardi B and Megan thee Stallion in a song released in 2020 titled, “WAP.” In the academic sense, we conceptualize WAP as referring to all pleasurable teaching and learning experiences and energies that arouse and excite the mind, body, and spirit. Pleasure activist, adrienne maree brown (2019) states that one of her pleasure principles is “checking for [their] orgasmic yes!” (p. 15). WAP is the full-bodied orgasmic yes that we experience with body sovereignty and the ability to dictate how our intellect and bodies are used for labor.

To identify our academic experiences more accurately as either erotic or anti-erotic, we began using the acronym DAP as the antithesis to WAP experiences. DAP, or dry ass pussy, hence, refers to safe scholarship that maintains the status quo, academic caste systems, and disempowering pedagogical practices. Finally, yet importantly, a flop refers to an unsuccessful academic circumstance or situation. We often use the word “flop” to characterize instances where we attempted to make an honest effort to bring about a WAP outcome, but polarities in *conocimientos* ultimately yielded a DAP experience. In the section below, we offer an abridged transcript of the original panel presentation on academic *putería* as prime examples of WAP, DAP, and flop collaborative experiences.

### **Academic *Putería*: The abridged transcripts**

#### **The Impetus for Conceptualizing Academic *Putería***

**Olga:** ...because of this isolation, [we] find each other in similar struggles. And we create spaces to be more conducive and more productive and collaborative. Sometimes these spaces... are the institutions themselves. But sometimes we must work from our homes or wherever we can; sometimes we have to even be mobile. What we have all in common here is our passion to teach and to gain

critical consciousness, but also to spark that in others. So, for academic *putería*—which can sound very, disruptive and messy—it is.

So, what I want to say about this is [that] it's really about labor. It's about the work that we do and just how much we feel like we're not enough when we do a lot more. And we're just the invisible labor that makes everything move. So, the working definition we have here is “intellectual labor” envisioned as a provocative means of self-promotion, self-interest, and self-preservation within an individualistic, neoliberal, multicultural academic society, which is not a *just* society. Multiculturalism is at the heart of neoliberal institutions so although there's representation at HSI's, such as the one where we work, it doesn't mean that we have real change. It's more like assimilation and integration, Academic *putería* is conceptualized as a method of pedagogy derived from lived experiences and strategies of survival in academic spaces. Having learned from some hard lessons, we don't want others to go through this. And so, it's through sharing our stories that we find strength in them, and we strategize better *movidas* in the academy.

### Unveiling the Conceptual Framework

**Tess:** So, this is our conceptual framework for academic *putería*, and the reason why I put this framework onto the image of a flower is because I wanted to stay within that rhythm of not putting things necessarily within a specific pecking order or hierarchy.



Figure 1. (Pantoja Perez, et al., 2022)

Each one of these theories and pieces that we're drawing from are critically important. So, I couldn't say that one had more influence over the other. Each one came with its own distinct knowledge and gift. But primarily in bold. To the top left, we have Black and Chicana feminist theory. So, if you had to wrap everything up in a nutshell and get to the heart of what we're drawing from and building on – it is clearly Black and Chicana Feminist theory. Thus, we have Gloria Anzaldúa's work represented here: soul work, image work, and *nepantla*—living between worlds and revising notions of reality—decolonizing reality.

We bring this theory to the reality of exploitation of the labor that is commonly produced by women of color or women from marginalized communities. This is something that is not new. It's well researched. And so, in order to be able to understand the problem, we needed to be able to break it down. In attempting to do this we realized that we had to confront the reality of it—where we labor, how our bodies are used, how this is not new. And then by drawing from Anzaldúan theory, we can and must engage in an exercise of reimagining: this is one reality, here's what another reality could look like.

It's also relative to soul work and image work as well, because this academic *putería*, like so much of our writing, creative works, and teaching, is derived directly from the body. There's no way that I can implement any of this or carry any of it out without my body, without my mind, without my spirit. It's *all* embodied. How does it relate to the soul and the image? You have one way of understanding yourself as a badass Chingona scholar. But there's also that professional image. There's a public image as well. So, it's not just one reality that we have to be conscious of. It's multiple realities. And then there's the reality that we'd like to reimagine and rewrite for ourselves as well. *And* we have the Coyolxauqui imperative (Anzaldúa 2005). So, it's also shadow work—confronting ugly truths that, maybe, we're not necessarily aware of. And there's this idea of the fragmented self. When we think about it from Anzaldúa's perspective, she says, that the goal in reimagining is not to bring ourselves back together in original form, but to transform into something new. With, of course, elements and components of the former self, but something new, something more improved, and we could argue, more powerful than before.

And then with Anzaldúa's concept of *nos/otras* – a hybrid consciousness—we know we're living in between these realities of being highly sexualized fetishized bodies. We are also living in between this world of white-collar professions, from blue-collar families and maybe living with blue-collar ideals in our day-to-day affairs, and then also the personal and the professional as well. What does it mean to be a professional but to also be a Chicana, and to also be queer? And what does it mean in the personal realm to be Chicana and to be queer? What is in-between?

That's where we're sitting right now.

We've got the feminist politics of bell hooks and Audre Lorde. And one of the primary things that we're arguing is that this teaching, these writings, these works of art that we produce are all very *sexually* charged and not necessarily in a pornographic way. As Audre Lorde explained, that when we teach, learn, and create we do so with the intention of bringing about joy, euphoria, and pleasure—that is erotic (1984). And that's what we're trying to bring back and re-center; bring sexy back, but not in a Justin Timberlake, white man way. Bring the erotic back. Bring the pleasure back, bring the euphoria back—the joy that emerges from the process of transforming straight-up trash experiences into treasures.

But we also must combat the realities of the institution. And that brings us back to Lorde's essay "Uses of the erotic: The erotic as power." We believe that power exists in our histories and within our narratives. And we believe that they have the capacity to make us and others feel pleasure, euphoria, and joy, to teach, to empower, and to heal.

### **Voicing Academic *Putería* Through Narrative**

**Olga:** The breakdown of our personal stories and the methodology of how we break down our stories is erotic play. It's just fun. We don't mean to just sit here and theorize, but we do after we share our stories, we say things like, you know what's funny? And then it's not actually funny, right? It's painfully funny in the most literal sense. And then we make art out of it through our stories. And one of the things that we do in this place is we make GIFS. And so, these GIFS that you're going to see throughout the presentation are original content. This is our medicine.



It is what makes us laugh at night, when we're texting each other or communicating throughout the day. Smile now, cry later: a token chicana/x, love-hate story. It still makes me laugh. This in and of itself is that third space where we can center our bodies, center our emotions, and find language to talk about this experience. And it is— I wouldn't say anti-academic, but it is pushing back against the norm of what is commonly accepted as academic. This is how our bodies talk and touch through language.

**Tess:** So, we're talking about academic *putería*, the theories and concepts that we're drawing from and how it's derived from the body. I also want to paint a picture of how this really plays out. And so, one of the things that I was thinking about was: how many folks are unaware or aware of the fact that they're engaging in academic *putería*? Whether you realize it or not, *you are*. It doesn't matter if you're at an HSI or not, or if you are attending a university or a community college, or if you're faculty, staff, or a student, the fact of the matter is that you are.

Once we realized that this thing, *putería* is a thing, and it's very common, it's nothing new, we're just naming it as part of the meaning-making process, we began making memes and GIFs to help us make sense of the things that we didn't have a language for. And so that's where we started, making memes and GIFs. Laughing about it. And what we thought was curious about it is that, while they are memes and GIFs, there's a larger story behind them. Everyone has their own shady academic *putería* story and everyone has an empowering story of being on their academic *putería* grind.

Yet there's also a *pica* associated with referring to ourselves as any variant of the word *puta*, or whore. Hence, using the word *putería* carries negative connotations. It's something that is regarded as a loaded word. So, I also think that we use humor to help us take a little of the edge off it and, on a personal basis, I'm not afraid of the word.

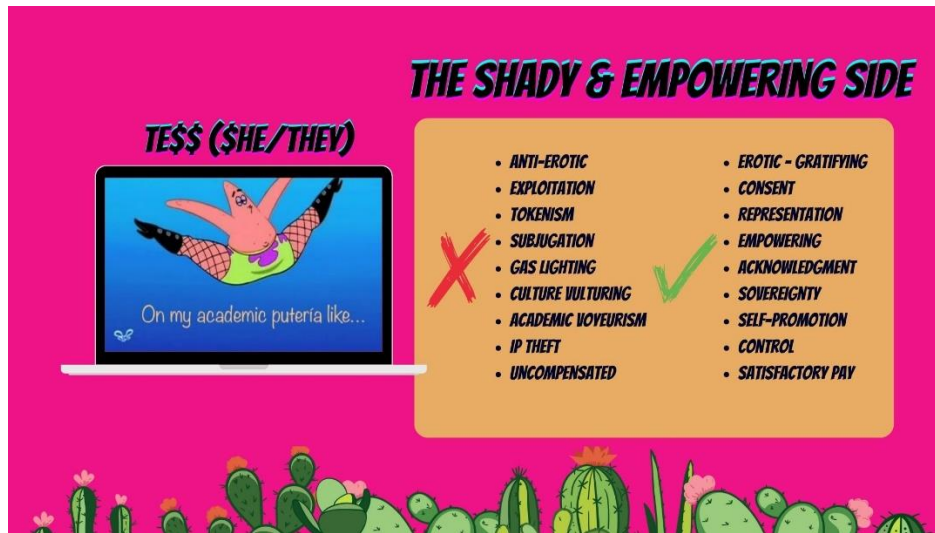


Figure 3. (Pantoja Perez, et al., 2022)

In this graphic, beginning on the left-hand side, we have the shady and the empowering side of academic *putería*. When we're talking about the shady side—it's anti-erotic. There's going to be times where we're out here doing academic labor, trying to produce, and we're going to have a lot of vibe killer moments. That's what it is for me when your vibe is being killed and it sucks the joy out of something that should have been exciting and a source of pride. And we also have the shady side of academic *putería* that involves exploitation. Take for instance student pay, as a work-study, a graduate assistant, as a research assistant, or as a TA. Again, these are not new. These are things that have been already talked about and circulated in the academic community. We've also got tokenism, and that can be tokenism of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, language. Yes. It doesn't feel good to be that person. And it's also tied into bridge work that you do not necessarily consent to, as well as being that one token person representing whatever form of diversity that the institution requires. Tokenism places responsibility onto your shoulders without your consent, contributing to your subjugation. It intersects with institutional practices that keep you hungry, making sure that you keep coming back to the same toxic situations because you depend on it in order to survive. You need the funding. You need the opportunity. You need that line on the CV. You need this exposure. You need to finish your education.

We have a culture of gaslighting that goes on and that works hand in hand with gatekeeping. We have culture vulture-ing in the academy. And we also have academic voyeurism, where folks who lack a particular *conocimiento* and/or embodied experience, and work outside of your field of expertise, will sit and watch *how* you do and *what* you do, so that they can later peck away at the controversial shell and take off with whatever sexiness they can later profit from. Lurking. And it falls in line with exploitation, and intellectual property theft as well. But I need you to understand, if you don't already know, that this can happen within your circles and within the broader institution itself. So be aware of that.

Uncompensated labor is also nothing new. It is widely discussed in academic circles—the invisible labor that goes unappreciated, especially when you're trying to make those marks for your reviews. It's not something that the institution values and rewards, as evidenced by the fact that there's no money associated with that labor. It's expected because you're the token.

In contrast to all of the above, academic *putería* is erotic, it's gratifying. Like, man... I came out and did the damn thing! And this has got representation. It's very raw, straight from the mind, body, and spirit. I don't feel like, okay, my brain did this, but the rest of me just was on vacation because it was too stressful for any other part of me to come to the table for this work. It's consensual. Your work is acknowledged. And instead of culture vultures, you have sovereignty. You have agency. You have a say so over your own work and over your body, over your time and self-promotion, as opposed to academic voyeurism or being pimped out by the institution. You're able to promote yourself and feel that it is safe to hype yourself.

### **Notions of WAP, DAP, and Flop Academic *Putería* Experiences**

**Olga:** Although there's a hyper representation of Latinx and Chicano/a/xs folks at HSIs, there's still repressiveness. I'm talking about sexuality, and there's still this uneasiness regarding feminism, or politics, or just emotions in general. You're supposed to be seen as tough in the academy. When you express that something feels exploitative or a little too much, you get gas lit. That has been my entire experience up until now.

Being pushed out of a violent, heteronormative program because that was very *dry* pushed me through to what Anzaldúa termed a Coatlicue state. Moving out of that state through reflection gave rise to the theories we are talking about today: “WAP” represented in our memes as a dysphemism to a wet ass pussy-type of educational experience. Cardi B raps about the WAP. And you don't have that in the academy, not when you're a scholar like me unless you're deciding to be interdisciplinary. But that should be a choice.

This is from the body. I cannot tell you more about how real this experience is for me. I love that we can look and do this reflection and look at the *pica* and talk about these hard topics and dialogues. And in this place of academic isolation, I've had to do a lot of bridge work and take risks, and branch out and meet people and other scholars, different scholars. Queer collaborations, do not necessarily have to have a queer embodied Chicana feminist politic, but must be queer in their approach towards consciousness-raising with inclusivity and a queer sense of home.

And so, our theory and method is also learning from our differences. Teaching from the margins has taught me how to facilitate difficult conversations or work through these tensions. I teach the intro classes, the classes that our star professors don't want, such as intro to women's studies, and intro to LGBTQ studies courses. I love it. It's healing. I love to be part of that process of giving students language that will empower them to help them also engage in their own journey to self-discovery. The Texas K-12 system involves a very dry, colorblind, binary curriculum. And so, when many students come into my class, they've never had Mexican American studies, they never had LGBTQ studies, they've never even had access to comprehensive sex ed.

### **Radical Accountability and Vulnerability**

**Olga:** In my classes we talk about the body, and all these things are relational and help us make better bonds not only inside the classroom, but with each other. Similar to having those difficult conversations at home with family and friends, when you have that intimacy and language, you can also have accountability. That's my love language. If I must lovingly snatch your wig, it's out of love. It's not out of violence. It's like, I don't want you to go out to the streets and have someone else check you. That would be violent.

**Tess:** Better me than someone else.

**Olga:** And I expect the same. We don't need to respond by lashing out. But when it's my turn and there's something that I'm not aware of or I'm not conscious of, bring me to consciousness.

**Tess:** Part of critical awareness is being open and vulnerable with each other, but also holding each other accountable and getting that wig occasionally snatched. When it needs to be snatched, it needs to happen. Because, again, it's better that it happens, and it comes from me with love than someone from down the street. But when we're problematic, we need to be called out on being problematic. It's better for the entire community that we self-police. I still want to be happy to be here. Just because we are in a place of privilege or just because we elected to come into these programs and were accepted based on *merit*, it doesn't mean that we should expect to be treated and received negatively. It doesn't mean that this is how it always has to be. What it does mean is that we can push back in some cases, in some spaces, in some instances, and demand more equity. And not like a little pat on the head. Equity in cash money, or at least something to put on my CV! No more unpaid labor!

**Olga:** I want to believe that you *could* get wet about being made to feel like teaching and learning are a big deal. The attitude is that we shouldn't get all worked up and/or wet about it. But we should—we should care! And we should be able to do research and create scholarly work in collaboration with each other and love it! We can love on it, because everything that I'm going to do here is out of love.

**Tess:** It's going to be *fire*!

**Olga:** It's going to bring me joy. But it's also going to bring whomever reads and gets the intimacy of my language to feel that love and *cariño*. And so that is my utopic envisioning, or my romance of the academy, and the seduction that I could have all this and the WAP chequesote.

### **Discussion**

We conclude this portion of our analysis by critically reflecting on our own role in failed collaborations such as the one that we embarked on at the 2022

NACCS virtual conference. As developers of academic *putería* as a research topic, the authors processed the outcome of their collaboration in similar and distinct ways. Much to our shock, our third collaborator interpreted their role in presenting alongside two queer, Chicana/x dissertating scholars as a positive experience. In contrast, Olga's journal entry written shortly after the conference reflected a significantly different interpretation of their experience.

Knuck. 4/22/2022

...From this experience I have learned that when people tell you who they are BELIEVE them! She [the third collaborator] had one assignment, which was to do one presentation slide and follow the flow of the presentation but instead she tried to deviate our flow with dry-ass academic language. The assignment was to ground their *putería* experience in personal narrative, not deflect with scholarship. This is absolutely another day of toxic and disempowering *putería*. The bright side to all this is that my academic *comadre* and I had a lot of fun engaging in the erotic play and fleshing this shit out. You can just sense all the love that we have for the work that we do together.

Tess, on the other hand, took a more visual approach towards processing their feelings by logging into her Pinterest account to create a new pinboard titled, *Academic Tóxicas* and filled it with carefully curated images of clowns, trash bags, and other foolish things that closely aligned with the ridiculousness that they have encountered and overheard in academic spaces.

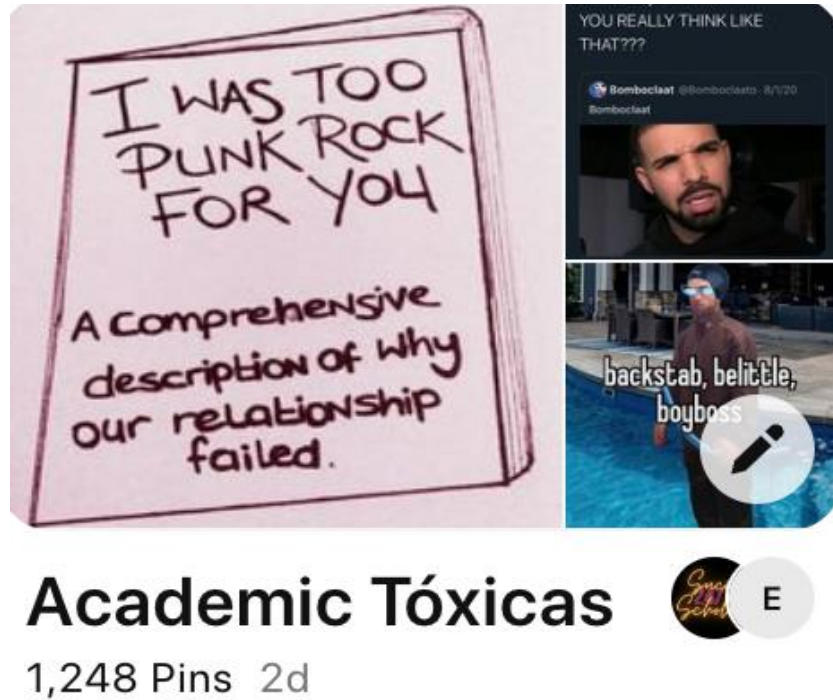


Figure 4. (Pantoja Perez, 2022)

Though the authors funneled their rage into different creative mediums, we both came to terms with our susceptibility to the academic seduction of belonging. In acknowledging our vulnerabilities, we implicate ourselves as accomplices in our own oppression. We sought out in others what we felt that we lacked in experience, credibility, and influence. Only after admitting to the problem, were we able to view ourselves as powerful and capable of standing on our own two feet as creators whose individual and collaborative work holds credence. As such, we move away from the DAP insecurities that lend themselves to seduction towards consensual and pleasurable WAP connections with future collaborators.

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## PART THREE: A Field for the Twenty-First Century: Toward a Global and Intersectional Scholar-Activism

If the history of language policy tells us anything, much more than the right to language choice is at stake here. The controversies, debates and political struggles over diverse language programs may lead more people to reflect not only on what language should be employed in education programs but also what contents, processes and values those programs should address.

Raymond Castro

“The Bilingual Education Act,” NACSS Proceedings, 1975

## The Campaign for Decent Housing: Black and Latino Coalition Building in Durham, North Carolina

Elizabeth Barahona

### Introduction

“We are not outnumbered, we are out-organized”- Malcolm X (1968)<sup>1</sup>

On a bright and sunny Saturday morning on September 26th, 1998, over four-hundred Black and Latino Durham, North Carolina residents marched through the streets of downtown Durham to protest for decent housing.<sup>2</sup> Black and Latino children led the rally and spoke into megaphones. They called landlords “slumlords” and demanded that they fix the holes in their apartment roofs, pave their roads to school, and that the city government address the sewage stench on the streets where they played.<sup>3</sup> This was the second annual rally and march of the Campaign for Decent Housing.<sup>4</sup> This was a community coalition made up of Black and Latino residents of the Northeast Central Durham

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm X. “Speech.” Speech, February 17, 1968, LFTKS, <http://www.lfks.net/en/content/h-rap-brown-free-huey-rally-1968-feb-17>.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Reale, “Rally urges safe neighborhoods.” *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, September 27, 1998: B1. *NewsBank*. A Note of Language: In this paper, I use the term “Black” to describe people of African-descent, including African-Americans, Black Americans, and immigrants of African descent. My primary sources that include newspapers, interviews, and documentaries used “Black” and “African-American” interchangeably in the 1990s and early 2000s. The majority of my historical subjects identified as Black. I do not use the term “Hispanic” and use the term “Latino” instead to move away from a government-created identity and towards an identity created by people of Latin-American descent. In local newspapers, Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably but most of my historical subjects self-identified as Latino/Latina.

<sup>3</sup> Miriam Stawowy. “Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads.” *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 7, 1998: C1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>4</sup> Miriam Stawowy. “Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads.” *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 7, 1998: C1. *NewsBank*.

neighborhood and led by various Black and Latino activist in the community.<sup>5</sup> East Durham was (and continues to be) a neighborhood developed by the city government in the 1950s that was intentionally under-resourced and cut-off Black residents from the rest of the city.<sup>6</sup>

The Campaign for Decent Housing organized protests and other initiatives against housing violations and Durham's long history of White supremacist urban housing policies.<sup>7</sup> Started in 1997, this coalition pressured officials to visit apartments to ensure that compliance was met.<sup>8</sup> After pressure from the Campaign, the Department of Housing finally checked the apartments where they found hundreds of violations in only three hours.<sup>9</sup> It had been decades since they had inspected the apartments. They charged the landlords with the violations they found that day and promised the residents that they would return to inspect more homes.<sup>10</sup>

The Campaign for Decent Housing united Black and Latino residents in their common fight to protest years of dilapidated housing, the city's neglect of East Durham, the poor infrastructure, the lack of government services like regular garbage cleanup, sewage, police, and funding for community resources.<sup>11</sup> Latino residents found themselves particularly affected as newcomers to the city. Landlords frequently took advantage of the fact that many Latino residents were undocumented, many did not speak English, and many did not know about their rights as tenants.<sup>12</sup> They threatened Latino residents with eviction or charged them

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<sup>5</sup> Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>6</sup> Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan and Carli Brosseau. "Gentrification in Durham: The 'it' city's downtown rise hasn't led to a black-owned boom." *The News and Observer*, October 30, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Virginia Bridges. "Officials view housing problem Durham mayor says bus tour 'opened my eyes'." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), October 27, 2002: C1. NewsBank.

<sup>8</sup> Robin L. Reale. "Rally urges safe neighborhoods." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), September 27, 1998: B1. NewsBank. Miriam Stawowy. "Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), August 7, 1998: C1. NewsBank.

<sup>9</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), August 7, 1998: C1. NewsBank.

<sup>10</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), August 7, 1998: C1. NewsBank.

<sup>11</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Hispanic residents land city housing-rights help." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), September 13, 1997: A15. NewsBank.

<sup>12</sup> Robin L. Reale. "Rally urges safe neighborhoods." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), September 27, 1998: B1. NewsBank.

\$30 if they complained about their housing conditions to city officials.<sup>13</sup> Many Latino adults stayed at home because they were afraid that landlords would retaliate if they participated in the rally.<sup>14</sup> The campaign highlighted this injustice and alleged that some landlords in East Durham were also city council members.<sup>15</sup> As a cross-racial and ethnic coalition, the Campaign for Decent Housing is one of many examples of how Black and Latinos joined to fight institutional White supremacy in Durham.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1990s, construction and development companies recruited undocumented Latino workers to Durham to exploit their labor. When undocumented Latinos arrived in Durham, they were directly and indirectly affected by Durham's history of White supremacy and the historical underdevelopment of the Black community. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Black Durham residents created a tradition of grassroots organizing to fight the manifestations of White supremacist policy, so Latino workers, with the support of their Black neighbors, were able to build on this legacy. As a way to counter this history and its legacy, in the 1990s and early 2000s, Black and Latino residents in Durham intentionally came together and created cross-racial coalitions in the form of grassroots organizations, civic campaigns and protests, credit unions, community centers, and schools. These coalitions were made to improve their community's standard of living and to fight White supremacy in the form of decades of housing negligence, over-policing, poor schools, increased criminalization, and the overall neglect of Black and Latino Durham neighborhoods. Durham is an example of how Black and Latino people can

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<sup>13</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 7, 1998: C1. NewsBank. Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>14</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Hispanic residents land city housing-rights help." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, September 13, 1997: A15. NewsBank.

<sup>15</sup> Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>16</sup> Borrowing from N.D.B. Connolly's *A World More Concrete* (2014), I define White Supremacy as "as a *system*—or a set of historical relationships—white supremacy was and is far more than the overtly and occasionally racist act. It includes laws and the setting of commercial and institutional priorities. White supremacy also includes the everyday deals that political operators and common people strike in observance of white privilege or, more accurately, white power. And in its overt and more infrastructural forms, white supremacy realized and maintained its power over several decades through its ability to preserve order and to narrow the range of acceptable political expression." N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (University of Chicago Press, 2014), 4.

overcome their own prejudices, strategize together, and dis-empower White Supremacy in the Deep South and in other regions of the United States.

The creation of the Research Triangle Park (RTP) in the 1990s resulted in a mass influx of Latino immigrants to Durham. The Research Triangle Park was a collaborative project between the city governments of Durham, Chapel Hill, and Raleigh, the state capital.<sup>17</sup> In the face of globalization and the migration of industry to the Global South, the city governments wanted to incentivize companies from a diverse range of industries, including pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, telecommunications, information technology, and computer networking to establish headquarters in RTP and attract high-skilled workers to live in any of the three areas.<sup>18</sup>

Durham city council members knew that they would need low-skilled laborers to construct RTP and maintain it.<sup>19</sup> At first, Black residents filled positions in construction, maintenance, child care, and domestic work but by the late 1980s, RTP was growing too quickly for the local population to meet the demand for cheap labor.<sup>20</sup> The number of employees at RTP was heading toward 50,000.<sup>21</sup> It would continue to grow until its completion in 2005.<sup>22</sup> In the 1990s, the city and construction firms resorted to recruiting undocumented Latino labor through informal networks.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the creation of RTP resulted in a mass influx of Latino immigrants to Durham in the 1990s.

Many factors pushed and pulled undocumented Latinos to Durham in the 1990s. Construction and development companies in Durham wanted cheap labor to continue to build RTP and preferred employing undocumented immigrants to

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<sup>17</sup> Chris O'Brien. "As RTP turns 40, the big picture is to think small." *The News & Observer*, January 10, 1999: A1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>18</sup> Chris O'Brien. "As RTP turns 40, the big picture is to think small." *The News & Observer*, January 10, 1999: A1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>19</sup> "Letters to the editor." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, July 16, 2005: A8. *NewsBank*.

<sup>20</sup> Jim Wise. "Durham neighborhood group gets to know Hispanic neighbors better," *The News and Observer*, May 8, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Chris O'Brien. "As RTP turns 40, the big picture is to think small." *The News & Observer*, January 10, 1999: A1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Bloom. "30-year, 12-mile project completed." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, July 26, 1998: A1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>23</sup> Chenoa A. Flippen and Emilio A. Parrado, "Forging Hispanic Communities in New Destinations: A Case Study of Durham, NC," *City & Community* 11, no. 1 (March 2012): 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6040.2011.01369.x>.

citizens.<sup>24</sup> Employers could exploit undocumented workers' lack of legal status and English-speaking skills by paying them below the legal minimum wage, working them for longer hours, and denying them worker's rights like worker's compensation or breaks. They went to agricultural worksites near Durham and promoted their companies or they hired immigrants to go around the state and paid them per individual they recruited.<sup>25</sup> Construction and development companies further incentivized immigrants by offering to pay for their bus tickets from towns in Mexico and cities in the Southwest to Durham.<sup>26</sup>

At the same time, political and economic instability in Latin America as a result of the Cold War, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Operation Gatekeeper, among other events, pushed many immigrants to escape violence and find work in the United States.<sup>27</sup> Many immigrants who worked in the Southwest eventually migrated East to Durham to escape the rise in xenophobia and the increasing cost of living in Southwestern states.<sup>28</sup> In California, the state with the largest number of undocumented Latino immigrants, xenophobia became manifested in the passing of Proposition 187. Proposition 187 was a state law that restricted "illegal aliens" from accessing public benefits.<sup>29</sup> Similar laws were passed throughout the U.S. Southwest, and this demonstrates widespread xenophobia against undocumented immigrants.<sup>30</sup> Laws like Proposition 187 were not implemented in North Carolina because the state had a very small number of undocumented immigrants in comparison to the Southwest.

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<sup>24</sup> Chenoa A. Flippen, "Laboring Underground: The Employment Patterns of Hispanic Immigrant Men in Durham, NC." *Social problems* vol. 59,1 (2012): 21-42. doi:10.1525/sp.2012.59.1.21

<sup>25</sup> Chenoa A, Flippen and Emilio A Parrado. "Forging Hispanic communities in new destinations: A case study of Durham, NC." *City & Community* vol. 11,1 (2012): 1-30. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6040.2011.01369.x

<sup>26</sup> Thompson, Charles. *The Guestworker*. DVD. Directed by Cynthia Hill. Durham: DocSouth, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 253.

<sup>28</sup> Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>29</sup> This law was signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger but was challenged in court and a federal court prohibited it, preventing the law from coming into effect. Martin, Philip. "Proposition 187 in California." *The International Migration Review* 29, no. 1 (1995): 255-63. doi:10.2307/2547004. Williams, Christopher Newell. "Caught in the Web of Scapegoating: National Coverage of California's Proposition 187." Order No. 3319946, The University of Texas at Austin, 2008, 98.

<http://turing.library.northwestern.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/193657873?accountid=12861>.

<sup>30</sup> "U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Population by State, 2016 | Pew Research Center," accessed May 22, 2019, <https://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/u-s-unauthorized-immigrants-by-state/>.

In rural North Carolina, companies welcomed immigrants because they filled low-paying, labor-intensive agricultural and poultry jobs.<sup>31</sup> In urban areas, like Durham, companies also welcomed immigrants because they filled the need for cheap labor in construction and domestic work. Only after Durham's construction boom ended in the mid-2000s, did the city implement anti-immigrant policies like Proposition 187 as a way to dispose of the large population of undocumented Latinos in the city.<sup>32</sup>

At the turn of the twenty-first century, North Carolina experienced the fastest growth in Latino populations in the country. Durham was the city with the twenty-fifth fastest growing Latino population in the country.<sup>33</sup> In 1983, there were about 1,000 Latino residents in Durham, 2,000 by 1990, 17,000 by 2000, and 36,000 by 2010.<sup>34</sup> These statistics are not even entirely accurate. Demographers predict that the statistics are much higher because they note that 90% of Durham's Latino population was undocumented and many people avoided enumeration for fear of deportation.<sup>35</sup> The immigrants' lack of legal U.S. documentation affected where they were able to live when they arrived in Durham in the 1990s. Housing is the point where undocumented Latino migration met the history of housing and White supremacy in Durham.

### **Black and Latino Durham in the 1990s**

When Latinos arrived in Durham, they faced the legacies of White supremacy in Durham when they were barred from moving into White neighborhoods. Even though housing segregation was illegal in 1990, White neighborhoods legally barred undocumented Latinos by requesting social security numbers for credit checks, asking for two months of pay stubs, and providing

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<sup>31</sup> Thompson, Charles. *The Guestworker*. DVD. Directed by Cynthia Hill. Durham: DocSouth, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Nguyen, Mai Thi, and Hannah Gill. "The 287(g) Program-The Costs and Consequences of Local Immigration Enforcement in North Carolina Communities." *The Latino Migration Project The Institute for the Study of the Americas & The Center for Global Initiatives*, February 1, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> "Hispanic Immigrants Durham's job magnet." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, November 13, 1998: A14. *NewsBank*. "Latino Immigrants Come to the U.S. with Negative Stereotypes of Black Americans, New Study Shows," *Duke Today*, accessed May 20, 2019, <https://today.duke.edu/2006/07/racialpolitics.html>.

<sup>34</sup> "Durham Neighborhood Group Gets to Know Hispanic Neighbors Better," *News and Observer*, Durham, North Carolina, January 1, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Greg Johnson. "Hispanic

applications only in English.<sup>36</sup> Latinos did not have social security numbers, were often paid in cash with no pay stub records, and most did not speak or read English.<sup>37</sup> Latinos turned to East Durham where they were received and welcomed by many members of the Black community, including landlords.<sup>38</sup>

East Durham was a magnet for Black migrants in Durham and had a history of housing migrants with low-incomes.<sup>39</sup> Most landlords rented apartments in East Durham without asking for social security numbers nor requiring proof of income nor implementing housing applications.<sup>40</sup> They offered low rental costs, were tolerant of overcrowding, but the caveat was that these apartments were in deteriorated conditions.<sup>41</sup> When landlords realized that most of their Latino tenants were undocumented, they threatened to evict them or notify the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the governmental entity that deported undocumented people.<sup>42</sup> Landlords relegated undocumented families to these inhumane conditions, but did not threaten Black tenants in the same manner understanding that Black residents were better aware of their rights as tenants, could argue with landlords in English, and regularly petitioned housing violations to the city government, even though they went unaddressed.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Chenoa A. Flippen and Emilio A. Parrado, "Forging Hispanic Communities in New Destinations: A Case Study of Durham, NC," *City & Community* 11, no. 1 (March 2012): 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6040.2011.01369.x>.

<sup>37</sup> Armando Mendez, Interview by Colin Austin. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>38</sup> Wade Bowick, Interview by Angela Hornsby. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>39</sup> Flippen and Parrado, "Forging Hispanic Communities in New Destinations"; Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham*; Davidson, *The Best of Enemies*. Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>40</sup> Armando Mendez, Interview by Colin Austin. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>41</sup> Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>42</sup> Robin L. "Rally urges safe neighborhoods." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, September 27, 1998: B1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>43</sup> Robin L. "Rally urges safe neighborhoods." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, September 27, 1998: B1. *NewsBank*. Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.



Since Latino residents arrived to Durham in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Black residents incorporated Latinos into their long tradition of community organizing to improve living conditions in East Durham. Black, White, and Latino residents through the local White congregation of the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church and the Black congregation at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church came together with recent Latino migrants to establish El Centro Hispano.<sup>44</sup> El Centro increased access to translated resources and acted as a starting point to housing, schooling, and employment information and assistance. Latino volunteers worked at the center until full-time staff was hired.

These religious congregations found and rented office space for El Centro Hispano, and the North Carolina Minority Support Center (NCMSC) paid for the rent and utilities in the first couple of years.<sup>45</sup> The NCMSC was a coalition of Black credit unions that was founded in the twentieth century during Jim Crow segregation when Black residents were barred from White banks.<sup>46</sup> They issues loans and business support to Black residents who wanted to start their own businesses in Durham. The NCMSC was largely supported by the Mechanics and Farmers Bank, the first Black-owned bank in Durham created during segregation, a couple of years after Black residents first moved to the Hayti neighborhood of

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<sup>44</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s, the mission of local churches in Durham focused on “help[ing] assist community organizing for social transformation.” As part of their obedience to the mission of God, the church “would become involved in concrete situations of human suffering and side with the poor and marginalized as they become subjects of their own history.” Within the Catholic Church, this focus toward social justice took a sharper turn after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. Women of Color: Organizing for Transformation A Project of the Urban Rural Mission of the World Council of Churches November, 1994, in the Leah Wise Papers #5645, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “History | El Centro Hispano,” *El Centro Hispano History*, January 1, 2015. <https://www.elcentronc.org/content/history>.

<sup>45</sup> Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Katushka Olave, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Esperanza Hernandez, Interview by Elizabeth Barahona, December 23, 2018. “From Tobacco to Tortillas: Latinos Remake Durham, North Carolina.” *NBC News*, September 26, 2014. “History | El Centro Hispano,” *El Centro Hispano History*, January 1, 2015. <https://www.elcentronc.org/content/history>. Katushka Olave, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>46</sup> “Our Story,” *Self-Help Credit Union*, Durham, North Carolina, January 1, 2019. “History, The Journey of Carolina Small Business Development Fund.” *Carolina Small Business Development Fund*, Raleigh, North Carolina, January 1, 2019. Saundra Scales, Interview by Daphne Fruchtman. *Long Civil Rights Movement: African American Credit Unions*. Southern Oral History Program.

Durham in 1907.<sup>47</sup> An important aspect of the bank's charter is to "enhance the wealth and well being of the communities that we serve by providing competitive and holistic financial solutions, with particular emphasis on the financial needs of underserved populations and geographies."<sup>48</sup> The Mechanics and Farmers Bank was the first bank to support Latino businesses in Durham.<sup>49</sup> Not only did Black-owned banks support Latino community centers like El Centro Hispano, but when Latinos arrived in Durham, they directly worked with migrants to establish Latino businesses.

In October of 1997, a series of home invasions aimed at Latino residents, resulted in sensationalized news reports that aimed to pit Latino residents and Black residents against each other. The Herald Sun and the Raleigh WRAL news network published articles that said the "relationship between Black and Latino residents was strained" and in order to end the crime spree, more officers needed to patrol East Durham.<sup>50</sup> In response to these events, Black and Latino residents came together to address the structural issues that caused these crimes. Many Latino residents were undocumented laborers did not have social security numbers to open a bank account at a corporate bank, were paid in cash, and stored their money in their homes.<sup>51</sup> Residents saw a need for a Latino credit union that offered services unique to the Latino community like services in Spanish, membership for the majority undocumented Latino community, and classes about financial literacy. Latino residents and Black credit unions came together like they had in 1992 with El Centro Hispano and helped create the Latino Credit Union

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<sup>47</sup> "Our History," *Mechanics and Farmers Bank*, Durham, North Carolina, January 1, 2019. "History, The Journey of Carolina Small Business Development Fund." *Carolina Small Business Development Fund*, Raleigh, North Carolina, January 1, 2019. "Mechanics and Farmers Bank: North Carolina's Best Kept Secret." *The Winston-Salem Chronicle*, August 1, 1995.

<sup>48</sup> "Our Mission – M&F Bank," accessed June 28, 2022, <https://www.mfbonline.com/our-mission-2/>.

<sup>49</sup> "From Tobacco to Tortillas: Latinos Remake Durham, North Carolina." NBC News, September 26, 2014.

<sup>50</sup> "Relations Strained Between Blacks, Latinos in Durham," WRAL Raleigh, August 13, 1997. Miriam Stawowy. "Hispanics call together forum to focus on solutions to crime." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, July 1, 1997: C1. *NewsBank*. Robin Reale. "Black, Hispanic women work to build trust." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 7, 1997: A1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>51</sup> Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Miriam Stawowy. "Hispanics call together forum to focus on solutions to crime." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, July 1, 1997: C1. *NewsBank*.

(LCCU) that opened in 2000.<sup>52</sup> The LCCU grew to become the largest credit union in the state and its members included Black and White residents.<sup>53</sup>

The sensationalized reports from the 1997 events overlooked the past seven years of cross-racial organizing that had bonded the two groups. The reports though, heavily influenced the police and city government to take a different approach to prevent crime.<sup>54</sup> The police department applied to the state's crime commission grant in 1997 and was awarded \$57,000 to begin the Hispanic Outreach Intervention and Strategy Team (HOIST). The Durham police created this initiative to better protect and police Latino residents.<sup>55</sup> The program consisted of hiring two bilingual police officers who patrolled East Durham without weapons.<sup>56</sup> The officers would serve as translators for the Latino community and instead of calling 911, residents would call the officers.

The goal of the program was to "reduce fear of police" among the Latino community.<sup>57</sup> The program continued to apply for more federal grants and increased to four officers. The program was eventually fully funded by the Durham police department's budget.<sup>58</sup> For over nine years, the Durham police trained themselves alongside the Latino community to better police them and even established an office for themselves in El Centro Hispano. This community policing later became detrimental to the Latino community in 2008 when the Durham police united with Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agents (ICE) to deport Latino families.

The coalition between Black and Latino residents continued despite the obstacles news media and policing authorities presented for the group. Important

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<sup>52</sup> "From Tobacco to Tortillas: Latinos Remake Durham, North Carolina." *NBC News*, September 26, 2014. "Our History." *Cooperativa Latino Credit Union*, January 1, 2019

<sup>53</sup> "Our History." *Cooperativa Latino Credit Union*, January 1, 2019 "Mission." *Cooperativa Latino Credit Union*, January 1, 2019

<sup>54</sup> Robin Reale. "Black, Hispanic women work to build trust." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), August 7, 1997: A1. NewsBank. Miriam Stawowy. "Interpreters bridge gap between police, Hispanics." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), July 20, 1997: B1. NewsBank.

<sup>55</sup> Linda Miller and Kären Hess, *Community Policing: Partnerships for Problem Solving* (Cengage Learning, 2007), 195.

<sup>56</sup> Kammie Michael. "Bilingual liaisons essential for police Translators provide vital link between Hispanics, officers." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), November 2, 1998: B1. NewsBank.

<sup>57</sup> Theodore, Nik. *Insecure Communities: Latino Perceptions of Police Involvement in Immigration Enforcement*. Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago, 2013. Accessed May 1, 2019.

[https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/INSECURE\\_COMMUNITIES\\_REPORT\\_FINAL.PDF](https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/INSECURE_COMMUNITIES_REPORT_FINAL.PDF).

<sup>58</sup> Miller and Hess, 196.

to this struggle is that they understood that poor housing and infrastructure in East Durham contributed to the crimes. As a response to poor housing and White supremacy, they created the Campaign for Decent Housing and brought over 400 people together and twenty-five Durham organizations to address the dilapidated housing, the threats landlords made to Latino residents, and the vacant city-owned houses.<sup>59</sup> In the first year of the campaign, Black residents supported a petition made by Latino residents that documented the cases of substandard housing.<sup>60</sup> In the second year of the campaign, they successfully pressured Durham officials to inspect apartments where Latinos lived for housing violations. Within three hours, officials found over 600 code violations and had to return for subsequent visits to address health code violations.<sup>61</sup>

Apart from housing coalition, Black and Latino residents understood that reports about the home invasions instilled fear among newly arrived Latino residents. In 1997, Black and Latino residents created two programs that helped build personal relationships between the residents. The Crossing Community Borders Forum was organized at the Hayti Heritage Center and the Black and Hispanics Are Alike (BAHA) coalition was started at the Eastway Elementary School for parents and both continued for three years.<sup>62</sup> The Crossing Community Borders Forum organized regular sessions where Black and Latino residents of East Durham shared a community potluck, brought mariachi groups and rhythm-and-blues singers to perform, and organized youth activities for children like bilingual scavenger hunts and story hours.<sup>63</sup>

The BAHA coalition was organized by Latina and Black activists, Rossana Perez and Jackie Wagstaff. The organizers understood that Latino parents and children had been impacted by the events and wanted to work to

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<sup>59</sup> Robin Reale. "Rally urges safe neighborhoods." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, September 27, 1998: B1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>60</sup> Armando Jose Carbajal, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

<sup>61</sup> Miriam Stawowy. "Officials from Housing look for violations Inspectors make good on promise to assist Hispanic community at Cross Roads." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 7, 1998: C1. *NewsBank*.

<sup>62</sup> Ronnie Glassberg. "Black, Latino groups seek to build bridges of understanding Spanish professor offers suggestions on how to develop closer ties within the community." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 23, 1999: B1. *NewsBank*. "Relations Strained Between Blacks, Latinos in Durham," WRAL Raleigh, August 13, 1997.

<sup>63</sup> Ronnie Glassberg. "Black, Latino groups seek to build bridges of understanding Spanish professor offers suggestions on how to develop closer ties within the community." *Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)*, August 23, 1999: B1. *NewsBank*.

reduce the anxieties and fears among the community members. Its goal was to create personal relationships between Black and Latino parents of Eastway students and teach each other to speak in their native languages.<sup>64</sup> About twenty BAHA families met weekly during weekday mornings and the group quickly evolved into a space where members could advocate for better housing and share their personal issues. One week the group invited landlords to talk peacefully about the community's issues with housing, and in another week a mother opened up about the death of her baby.<sup>65</sup> Coalitions like Crossing Community Borders and Blacks and Hispanics Are Alike provided a space for community healing between neighbors and empowered residents to advocate for themselves about housing, education, and personal issues.

Black and Latino residents pushed back against every oppressive municipal policy and program that harmed them, they advocated for one another in housing and education, and they continue to do so today. Durham is an example of how Black and Latino coalition building can combat the legacy of White supremacy in local communities. Black and Latino community members responded to systemic injustices with grassroots organizing. The history and legacy of Black communities like the Mechanics and Farmers Bank, the Hayti Community Center, Black religious congregations, and Black activists, used their power and resources to aid incoming Latino community. Together they created organizations like El Centro Hispano, the Latino Community Credit Union. Through joint advocacy project like Black and Hispanics are Alike and the Campaign for Decent Housing, Black and Latino coalitions succeeded in improving conditions and providing resources for working-class communities in all sorts of communities outside of big cities.

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<sup>64</sup> Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program. Ronnie Glassberg. "Black, Latino groups seek to build bridges of understanding Spanish professor offers suggestions on how to develop closer ties within the community." *Herald-Sun, The* (Durham, NC), August 23, 1999: B1. NewsBank. "Relations Strained Between Blacks, Latinos in Durham," WRAL Raleigh, August 13, 1997.

<sup>65</sup> Jacqueline Wagstaff, Interview by Alicia Rouverol. *Listening for a Change: New Immigrants Project*. Southern Oral History Program.

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## Toward a Transnational Chicanidad: New Tribalism, Environmental Justice, and China

Alejandro Ollin Prado

### **Introduction**

In 2018 mark! Lopez was an invited speaker for the Clean Air Asia conference in Beijing.<sup>1</sup> This is a conference organized with the aim to develop policy changes for clean air initiatives in response to the impact of the logistics industry in China, specifically port pollution. Lopez attended as a representative for the US-based nationwide organization the Moving Forward Network (MFN) as well as the local organization East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice (EYCEJ) which focuses on the areas of South East Los Angeles and Long Beach. As an invited speaker in China, he shared his local Los Angeles experience and community-based efforts to impact the clean air policy in general and especially that around the San Pedro Port Complex. The San Pedro Port Complex refers to two ports, the Los Angeles Port and the Long Beach port that together have a massive impact on the US economy.

Lopez's global reach is not new and in fact, he comes from a lineage of internationally recognized Chicana/o activism. In 2017 he was awarded the

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<sup>1</sup> mark! Lopez writes his name as "mark!" to refer to the fact that he is enthusiastically anti-capitalist. The writing is designed to spark an interest and possible discussion so that people can learn more about his politics and life commitments.

Goldman Environmental Prize, a recognition comparable to a Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>2</sup> This award propelled Lopez into the world scene which led him to become an invited speaker in China. Additionally, he comes from a family of community grounded environmental-focused activism. For instance, his grandmother Juanita Gutiérrez, was a founding member of the Mothers of East Los Angeles, a community organization, with global impact, that was extremely active in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century where they focused on different issues pertaining to community empowerment and justice.<sup>3</sup>

The experiences and political commitments that Lopez's holds complemented the mission of Clean Air Asia, an organization with the aim to better the air quality in Asia through policy work that reduces air pollution and emissions. The Clean Air Asia conference was a multi-day conference that focused largely on their own localized discussion about air issues in China and also brought in speakers from around the world to discuss the work and success they were doing in their home location around clean air issues. At the conference, the politically engaged audience was eager to learn about Lopez's experience around the MFN and EYCEJ as these lessons were extremely relevant, timely, and motivating.

The reason that organizers in China were looking at Los Angeles in general and EYCEJ/MFN in particular, was because of the policy changes that have occurred around zero emissions politics such as the California Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory Program. This emission inventory is in charge of looking at historical trends of greenhouse gas as well as looking at the progress made in California to bring down these figures.<sup>4</sup> This is an important tool that shows that there has been progress made in terms of lowering air pollution. Nonetheless, as identified by the Neighborhood Data for Social Change the communities of South East Los Angeles are 94% Latino and experience a higher rate of pollution than

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<sup>2</sup> "2017 Goldman Prize Winner mark! Lopez," The Goldman Environmental Prize, accessed 12 July 2022, <https://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/mark-lopez/>.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Pardo, "Gendered Citizenship: Mexican American Women and Grassroot Activism in East Los Angeles," in *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. David Montejano., 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 58-79; Mary S. Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists: Identity and Resistance in Two Los Angeles Communities* / Mary S. Pardo (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> "Current California CHG Emission Inventory Data," California Air Resources Board, California Government, accessed 18 March 2022, <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/ghg-inventory-data>.

Los Angeles in general.<sup>5</sup> Thus, while the air is improving in the places where the Latino populations live, they continue to face a disproportioned impact. While these policy shifts become formalized through the city of Los Angeles it is interesting that the Clean Air Act conference organizers did not prioritize formal state actors to present but the grassroots movements who have played a key role in ensuring that environmental policy changes occurred. This was the reason that Mark Lopez and his co-presenter Ana Baptista were invited. Nonetheless, the invitation to China stemmed from earlier moments of collaboration between Chinese officials who collaborated with the MFN through other avenues. This general connection between Lopez and China grounds the oral history approach I undertook which sought to uncover how he ended up in China, the work he did once he was there, and how he reflected on the importance of this trip. I share a small portion of this oral history throughout this paper.

The case study concerning Lopez's trip, *East of East LA: International Solidarity, Environmentalism, and Chicana/os in China*, serves as the backdrop for this paper where I work to theoretically engage identity shifts of Chicanidad within the context of global capitalism in general and in its dialectical relationship with China. To develop the global analytical tools to frame the significance of this trip, I realize the theoretical framework of "new tribalism" as posited by Gloria Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa develops new tribalism as a concept that urges an engagement with identity concerns in the contemporary moment of global capitalism.<sup>6</sup> To do so, I focus on the components of the logistics industry which create the conditions for transnational political solidarity. New tribalism serves to extend previous notions of *mestizaje*, which critics claimed were too essentialist, to one centered on solidarity and the development of identity within the context of a changing economy.<sup>7</sup> In this paper, I argue that if new tribalism positions contemporary identity in relation to the changing urban and spatial environment and if the logistics industry creates direct material connections between Los Angeles Chicana/Latina people and China, then the trip to China

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<sup>5</sup> Meghan Nazareno and Aileen Qin, "Neighborhood Wellbeing Environmental Quality for Latino/a Communities in Southeast Los Angeles," accessed 18 March 2022, <https://la.myneighborhooddata.org/2021/08/neighborhood-wellbeing-and-environmental-quality-for-latino-a-communities-in-south-east-los-angeles/>.

<sup>6</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* (London: Duke University Press, 2015), 65-94.

<sup>7</sup> Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 245-46.

represents a moment where working-class communities are moving toward the transnational engagements that subvert the state in an effort to reach solutions.

### **New Tribalism and International Politics**

[Going to China for this conference] didn't come out of nowhere. I was surprised. I was like, "Oh, shit. This is really dope." I wasn't necessarily shocked. It didn't come out of nowhere. I understand that it was, as everything in the movement, it is the culmination of work that folks had been putting in for years. Even though a lot of the work that was put on a decade ago or two decades ago, the intention wasn't to get here. This is where it's brought us.<sup>8</sup>

Lopez's trip to China is indicative of a larger conjunctural moment where Chicanidad is becoming more globally expansive and the connections to China are becoming ever more apparent.<sup>9</sup> This case study provides a concrete example to excavate the materiality and dialectical nature of new tribalism. To introduce new tribalism, Anzaldúa begins with the metaphorical example of the tree of life, (*el árbol de la vida*) to describe the interconnection between individuals and the changing world. New tribalism builds on Anzaldúa's previous work around *mundo zurdo* which pushes against the constraints of static identity categories.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, new tribalism makes an important epistemological shift toward materiality. Where *mundo zurdo* argues "that by changing ourselves we change the world," new tribalism focuses on the material shifts within global capitalism as interacting dialectically with the changing aspects of identity.<sup>11</sup>

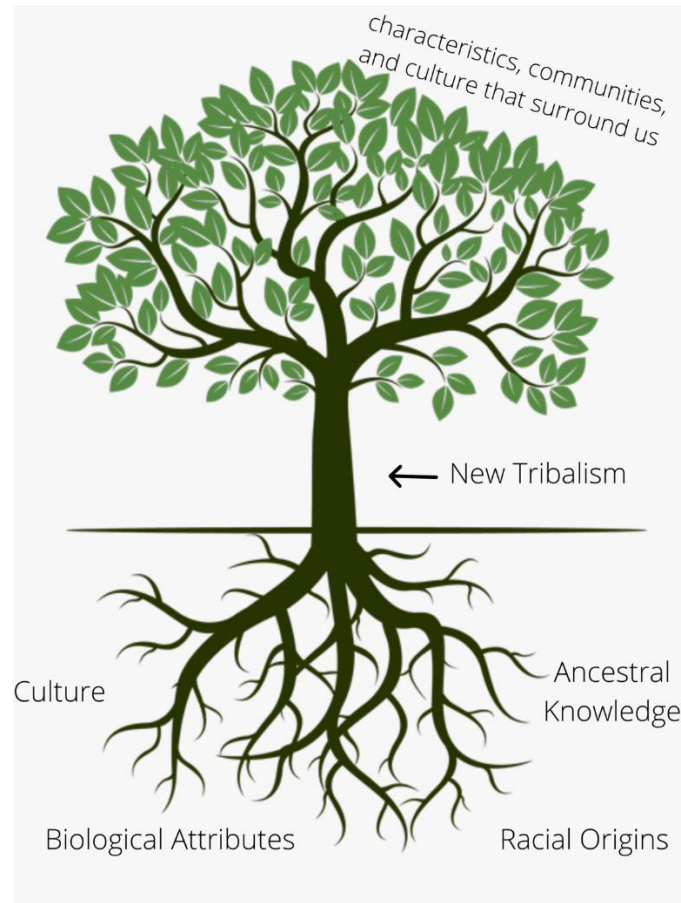
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<sup>8</sup> mark! Lopez in discussion with author, November 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Similar arguments about the dialectical relationship between global capitalism, identity, and the future direction of Ethnic Studies have been made by E. San Juan Jr., "The Ordeal of Ethnic Studies in the Age of Globalization," in *Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas*, ed. Wann W. Anderson and Robert G. Lee (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005) 280. Also, the centering of global capitalism to contextualized quotidian Chicane/Latine politics has been argued by Pancho McFarland, "The Chicano Rap on Globalization," in *Chicano Rap Gender and Violence in the Postindustrial Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 115-132.

<sup>10</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, "La Prieta," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writing by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 205-206.

<sup>11</sup> Anzaldúa, "La Prieta," 208.



(Image 1.1. Tree of Life as interpreted and depicted by author)

The arbol de la vida is described with deep roots and far-reaching branches and leaves to represent the interconnection between the individual biography and the changing material world that is constantly in flux (Image 1.1). The roots are dug deep into the soil as they refer to the ancestral origins, racial understanding, cultural roots, and biological attributes. These are the features that ground the individual but do not constitute its whole. The whole is reached when one conceptualizes the changing material conditions which we interact with. The leaves and branches reach far and wide and provide new experiences. This can mean a change of geographical space, new cultural communities, and in this case the impact of the logistics industry central to global capitalism. Thus, the new tribalism framework understands that established Chicano identity is important,

but it is changing as the contemporary global economy and lived experience shift which is pushing identity concerns in new directions.

Anzaldúa explains new tribalism:

The new tribalism is about being part of but never being subsumed by a group, never losing individuality to the group nor losing the group to the individual. The new tribalism is about working together to create new 'stories' of identity and culture, to envision diverse futures. It's about rethinking our narratives of history, ancestry, and even of reality itself.<sup>12</sup>

I identify three central tropes of new tribalism: 1) the fact that identity must be constructed dialectically with the material shifts in the world; 2) we are in a conjectural moment rooted in a capitalist crisis; 3) the nepantleras are the ones who will lead us in the direction of new tribalism. Anzaldúa anchors an understanding of contemporary identity as impacted by the changing urban and spatial landscape where Raza lives and interacts. Identity formation is a multilayered dynamic process that results from the impact of different geographical and temporal plains. Thus, to move from concept to form it is important to articulate how Lopez's case study encompasses the possibility to move toward a new tribalism. To do so, I utilize the three tropes that define new tribalism to analyze the oral history data.

At the geographical level, the politics around Los Angeles and the ports construct Lopez's lived experience, these are the leaves that construct a sense of Chicanidad. One that is constructed in an urban space. Mark! states:

I remember I went to a workshop, they [East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice] were hosting leadership development workshop, it was called Goods Movement 101. [...] It's all about how international trade works, globalization and capitalism. It's talking about how things are manufactured in China, and then are shipped over to the ports of LA and Long Beach and then put on trucks. Then those trucks take it to the rail-yards that are in

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<sup>12</sup> Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 85.



Commerce in East LA and then those trains take it out to the rest of the fucking country. [...] I didn't understand that before that workshop. I knew it but I didn't understand it within the context of a system. I didn't understand it within the context of NAFTA. I didn't understand it within the global capitalism that they were breaking it down in. Most importantly I didn't understand that that shit was right fucking here. That that infrastructure that facilitates this is right here. We are at one of the major arteries of global capitalism right here.<sup>13</sup>

The quote demonstrates how mark! came to understand his home as part of a larger web of the logistics industry. It was because he was raised in (the metaphorical leaves of) Los Angeles that his identity and political position were/are incorporated and influenced by the goods movement of global capitalism.

The San Pedro Bay Port Complex, based on 2020 figures, handles the most containers per ship in the world and is ranked number nine overall globally in terms of imports. The economic impact that this port holds is immense as it controls 74% of all west coast market shares and 31% of the market shares in the United States. While these percentages account for the activities of trade, the Los Angeles Ports statistical reports claim that it accounts for 1 in 12 jobs in the Los Angeles and Long Beach region as well as 1 in 48 jobs in the United States. Additionally, the top five trading partners with this port are China/Hong Kong, Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan, and South Korea. This is a massive port that impacts the United States and is connected globally with the rest of the world.<sup>14</sup>

While the unique politics of urban Los Angeles are influential, it is the ancestral roots grounded in Chicanidad that lead to an internationalist collaboration with folks in China. Collectivism on a global scale, based in material realities, has been a politics central to Chicanx organizing in particular and BIPOC organizing in general. For example, the organization Mothers of East

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<sup>13</sup> mark! Lopez in discussion with author, November 2020.

<sup>14</sup> “Annual Facts and Figures Card,” *The Port of Los Angeles Statistics*, <https://www.portoflosangeles.org/business/statistics>.

Los Angeles had political connections with women in South Africa who collaborated to develop similar urban infrastructure plans.<sup>15</sup> In fact, it was Lopez's mother, Elsa Lopez, who was a primary figure in this global exchange. Other collectives organized by People of Color such as the Combahee Collective and The August Twenty-Ninth Movement (Marxist-Leninist) have also organized themselves around particular material and social realities with global liberatory implications.<sup>16</sup> Lopez's politics and identity is one that is anchored in multiple generations of collectivism. For instance, in our interview, he references a story that his maternal grandmother told him about a time in Mexico when her mother (Lopez!'s great grandmother) would always share large parts of the pig they slaughtered with their local community.

My great-grandmother explained to my grandmother, if we give everything to everyone, everyone will give everything to us. Literally, every fucking time I even repeat that, I feel it in my body. When she said it, I felt fucking chills, and literally every time I tell that story, I feel it in my body." It hit me like, that's it, [...] this whole experience of life that I'd had up to this point, I get it, it's there.<sup>17</sup>

This type of intentional sharing, Lopez explained, was based on indigenous collectivism as people who had something valuable would share it in anticipation that others would also share with them when they were in a more favorable position. The geographical leaves of Los Angeles are influential but are grounded because of ancestral knowledge with deep roots. Yet, identity is dynamic, and it evolves and shifts through new interactions with different communities around the world. Thus, this trip to China presents a shift in his understanding of Chicanidad.

Given the expansive nature of identity, Anzaldúa argues for the second point of new tribalism which is to develop new terms to capture contemporary identity narratives. Anzaldúa views the current context of global capitalism as a conjunctural moment for identity issues, one she explains through the

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<sup>15</sup> Pardo, "Gendered Citizenship," 58-79.

<sup>16</sup> The August Twenty-Ninth Movement (M-L), *Fan the Flames: A Revolutionary Position on the Chicano National Question* (1976); *The Combahee River Collective Statement*. United States, 2014. Web Archive. <https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0028151/>.

<sup>17</sup> mark! Lopez in discussion with author, November 2020.

Coyolxauqui symbol.<sup>18</sup> This symbol refers to a process of disintegration and reconstruction with the aim to embrace the realities and contradictions of the contemporary moment before the development of any broad term of identification. This symbol is significant in the work of Anzaldúa as The Coloxuahqui Imperative explains the processes of ‘making and unmaking’ central to combating and healing spiritual, political, and global problems.<sup>19</sup>

The trip to China represents a Chicanidad that works to be part of a collaborative negation of the contemporary transnational contradictions—a possibility to reconstruct a community that rejects the destructive forces of the logistics industry. Where previous forms of 20th-century capitalist power were largely tied to the nation-state, the current moment is transnational and riddled with the implications of the Transnational Capitalist Class which present new forms of organization for power.<sup>20</sup> The process to reach new tribalism is not linear, China in this case study plays a central role in this development. Specifically, the communities and activists in China, who experience similar health hazards as a result of the logistics industry, represent the other ‘planetary groups’ that extend the tribe of communities. Together the communities transgress and resist the oppressive features of air pollution and the general logistics industries. Mark! reflects on the importance of new international connections:

I definitely think that the international connections are important. [...] I think it's important for the same reason that our communities within the US need to be connected is we need to be able to see beyond our communities. We need to learn from victories of other communities, and we need to share our victories.<sup>21</sup>

The final component of a new tribalism is one that is led by the Nepantleras, those activists and artists who create alliances that transcend the insider/outsider binary.

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<sup>18</sup> Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 85-94.

<sup>19</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, “Let us be the Healing of the Wound: The Coyolxauqui Imperative-la sombra y el sueño,” in *One Wound for Another una Herida por otra: Testimonios de Latin@s in the U.S. through Cyberspace (11 de septiembre de 2001-11 de marzo de 2002)*, ed. Claire Joysmith and Clara Lomas (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005), 92-103.

<sup>20</sup> William Robinson, *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 26.

<sup>21</sup> mark! Lopez in discussion with author, November 2020.

The individuals whom Anzaldúa calls “nepantleras” understand power relations and work to include new relationships and connections among various groups that have been positioned historically as antagonistic. To be more precise, nepantleras refer to mediators who have experience living in the interstices of different ‘worlds’ which empowers them to develop approaches to change and impact these worlds.<sup>22</sup> They do not only learn from these experiences but also create their own new meaning.<sup>23</sup> I position Lopez within the lane of nepantleras. First, the contemporary period has seen the rise of neo-cold war rhetoric that has positioned China as an emerging enemy and threat to the United States.<sup>24</sup> On the one hand, Lopez is a United States citizen—a citizen of a country that today stands ostensibly antagonistically to China, yet he is also part of a collective effort to fight the detrimental impact of the logistics industry that is rooted in environmental racism and global capitalism. The trip to China, grounded in a need for clean air and a zero-emission logistics industry, represents a third space that is outside of the dominant relationship of international relations and beyond the good/bad binary of the perspective towards China.

As a result of environmental racism and of grassroots international solidarity, simple binaries are complicated and disrupted, as common ground and political solidarity are built. This is impacting the way Lopez moves forward in his life, in the way that he raises his daughters and thinks about the future of the world. It creates possibilities for a world where future Chicanx people in Los Angeles can have conversations and relationships with those in China. Upon reflecting on the impact of this trip Lopez states:

It was difficult for me to be able to sustain any type of communication [with the folks in China], which has been a trip because I then look at some of the dual immersion [programs]. My daughters is on a dual immersion English-Spanish, but it has made me think about dual immersion Mandarin. Those programs have been around for a while but are emerging more. [...] I have

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<sup>22</sup> Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 245.

<sup>23</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, ed. AnaLouise Keating (New York: Routledge, 2000), 267.

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Layne, “Preventing the China-U.S. Cold War from Turning Hot,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 13, no. 3 (2020): 343–85, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poaa012>.

thought about what are the implications. I think part of what drives it is like the economic imperative of the powerhouse that is China. Something I've thought about is like, "What are the implications for the movement, to have folks in our communities who can also speak Mandarin?"<sup>25</sup>

While previous engagements with China have been present for Chicana communities, this trip was significant and reflects new movements for Chicana people in the world.

### Conclusion

New Tribalism, as a theoretical framework, highlights the significance of China for Chicana Studies through political solidarity. The inclusion of global capitalism to discuss new tribalism centers the global and identifies the challenges and potentially expansive implications of our contemporary moment. There are certainly current challenges such as a language barrier and geographic distance which make the realization of a new tribalism difficult. Yet, the case presented here is an example of a larger movement toward a new conceptualization of Chicanidad within global capitalism and rooted in environmental solidarity. As noted by Critical Environmental Justice scholar David Pellow, the communities who are most affected by environmental racism must be at the forefront of change and their expertise and experiences are essential for the movement toward a more just world.<sup>26</sup> This is understood by the activists in China and the main reason that the organizations that Lopez represented were invited as key speakers. The new tribalism that was conceptualized by Anzaldúa is one that will require many nepantleras/os to realize and develop the infrastructure to cultivate transnational cultural and political networks.<sup>27</sup> It is important that our scholarship and politics

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<sup>25</sup> mark! Lopez in discussion with author, November 2020.

<sup>26</sup> David N. Pellow, *What Is Critical Environmental Justice?* / David Naguib Pellow. (Cambridge, UK ; Polity Press, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> Similarly, feminist scholars have made a parallel argument about the importance of being relational and shared as a strategic approach to politics and collectivity that extends notions of the 'home' outside of patriarchal conceptualizations. See Oona Morrow and Brenda Parker, "Care, Commoning and Collectivity: From Grand Domestic Revolution to Urban Transformation," *Urban Geography* 41, no. 4 (April 20, 2020): 607–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2020.1785258>.

take the transnational dimensions of power into account to better frame how Chicax people are active agents within the context of global capitalism.

As I conclude this paper, I am left thinking about new possible avenues that link Chicanos with China. It becomes imperative to view this linkage not as tangential but imperative for the development of the discipline in the contemporary moment where transnational investments, pollution, and identity formation are in a qualitatively new phase. As China grows in global importance it is important to cultivate this relationship within our discipline.

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## NACCS Familia, Knowledge & Activismo: Contemplations from a Past Chair

Karleen Pendleton Jiménez

Have you ever tried to describe NACCS to other academics?

“Well, it’s an academic conference, but like with emotions with drama, with a march, with dancing, with 30-year-old relationships that feel like the pleasure and pain of family – the hate and love of family, and the weight of the responsibility of a civil rights movement.”

They wrinkle their eyebrows at me. “What?”

“Never mind”

This year I was a participant in a study on butch experiences in the workplace. One of the questions they asked of us was “did you ever have any butch role models in the workplace?” Apart from the former navy captain who used to run our campus security, whom I adored standing next to during convocation, I can’t think of anybody. The researcher nodded. Then she told me, it’s a big finding in her study –that we lack mentors.

But then I had to stop and ask, “Wait, do you consider conferences part of a professor’s workplace?” When she responded, “Yes” I had to try to explain NACCS to her.

“Well then, I go once or twice a year to these conferences where we find each other, a whole group of us, and we hug and present papers and Rusty (Barceló) plays the guitar and El (Heidenreich) and I buy sports shorts together and Maria (Gonzalez) gets stuff done on the board and Rita (Urquijo-Ruiz) performs theatre and Yvette (Saavedra) watches and records for the history books and there’re always more young and old ones pulling out crumpled pieces of paper and

reading aloud poems of desire for the first time. But that's just the butches. NACCS and MALCS (Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social) have been a 30-year lifeline to queer Chicana/o/x relationships, theory, methodologies, epistemologies, survival, sex, and dreaming; they are ground zero for the creation of Chicana/x queer knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

But that's just the queers.

The NACCS Chicana caucus, together with MALCS, are also the home of Chicana feminisms. The rooms where we find each other to learn and talk and heal.

But that's just the feminists.

I've also been hanging out with COMPAS (Rene Nuñez Political Action Caucus) on Friday afternoons of late because at one time Rene Nuñez and I taught together at San Diego State. He was a very tall, big haired man of the Movement. And I was a baby-faced dyke hoping my swagger would be enough to launch me into a postsecondary teaching career. He confessed to me that he didn't know much about queer stuff but he wanted to learn, especially if I was into it. In any case, he liked me, and I liked him, both of us activists, traviesxs, enjoying each other's company. He died way too early, but before he did, he handed me off to his best buddy Raoul Contreras.<sup>2</sup> And signed me up for COMPAS.<sup>3</sup>

COMPAS is like a Master Class in Chicano Studies/NACCS foundations. In addition to the goodhearted joking and all-around good faith in Chicana/x revolutionary endeavours, I learned the clarity of la perspectiva Chicana from

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief history of how these spaces were built see *Aztlán* 39 no. 1 (Spring 2014), articles by Rita Urquijo-Ruiz, Anita Tijerina Revilla, Emma Pérez, and Michael Hames-García, among others.

<sup>2</sup> Rene Nuñez was a founder of the field of Chicana/x Studies. After serving four years in the army, he earned his Bachelor's degree in 1967, and became increasingly involved in Chicana/x activism, participating in the 1968 East LA Blowouts and in the educational demonstration at the Biltmore Hotel. He was one of the "Biltmore 10," and was central to the success of the 1969 UC Santa Barbara conference that produced El Plan de Santa Bárbara. That same year he became Director of the Centro de Estudios Chicanos at SDSU. For the next three decades he dedicated his life to promoting Chicana/x studies and making education accessible to all in our communities. See Rene Nuñez Memorial Collection, "Biographical Note," San Diego State University Library, <https://archives.sdsu.edu/repositories/2/resources/326>.

<sup>3</sup> Note: He also told me to get my PhD at once—not a second too soon.

Reynaldo Macías, the stories of transformational learning of the Chicano Moratorium from Raoul Contreras, and the significance of Chicana activism on the world stage from Manuel de Jesus Hernandez.<sup>4</sup>

What I did as chair (and chair elect) (2019-2021):

- As Chair-Elect I chose, and helped to plan, the first ever Indigenous themed NACCS conference based on the request of the Indigenous Caucus, a long overdue painful and complicated conversation. It is only the beginning of what is needed.
- I also chaired meetings through a pandemic, when we didn't yet have the imaginations for it. Like so many of us, I worked scrambling to care for isolated elders, hiding out from a virus, balancing a hotel threatening to bankrupt us with members urgently needing information.
- A year into covid, I presided as Chair over the first virtual conference.
- I edited two newsletters, bringing together early tales of a faith in Chicana knowledge that helped our members survive sickness while scientists fumbled, together with eulogies to Chicana icons dying.
- I helped write, edit, and/or rope others into the writing of public statements on environmental action and rage against the systemic and literal murder of George Floyd.
- I listened and responded to a lot of members' concerns, ideas, dreams. I had the fortune to receive members' thanks for keeping NACCS available for us to simply find each other, and to know about the generosity of donations of funding to keep the organization standing.
- I also just did a lot of overall nudging to help make sure we kept moving along. The number one best thing though for me personally, selfishly, have been the beautiful friendships with other NACCS board members that I got to be a part of.

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<sup>4</sup>The following links offer information about the life and work of these veterano Chicano Studies scholars and activists: for Reynaldo Macías, co-founder of *Aztlán* and of the National Caucus of Chicano Social Scientists, see <https://chavez.ucla.edu/person/reynaldo-macias/>; for Manuel de Jesús Hernández-G., a founder of the field, who, as a youth attended the 1969 Denver Youth Conference see <https://search.asu.edu/profile/884>; and for insight into the pedagogy and politics of Raoul Contreras see <https://www.iun.edu/news/2017/participatory-democracy.htm?fbclid=IwAR0ImQhUqP6MF3-TWYY7-cznhIBXLP7EWUxpDgJAzlrr-VusgRSKh4jhsag>

What I wished I could do internally:

I wished I could offer more vision. I confess though, that if I could have just one thing, I would want something very practical. I want to figure out a way to help NACCS become stronger financially, for long-term sustainability. I want NACCS members to understand that financial health for our organization requires continuing commitment of ideas, work, and funds. Perhaps we could hold some type of summit with everyone (who is able) can pitch in ideas and/or money to keep us afloat for another fifty years. I also want a clear plan for a leadership pipeline (as Aureliano DeSoto mentioned). I was on the nomination committee this year, and it was difficult to find someone to run as chair. How can we make the chair position a role that is valued and sought after?

What I wish I could do externally, via our public voice:

- Environmental and food justice with Devon Peña, Luz Calvo, and Catriona Esquibel.<sup>5</sup>
- Concrete interventions to love and save the land.
- I would also be happy if NACCS could put a stop to Putin. Get him ousted, he's making me super nervous, but let's not stop there, let's go for nuclear disarmament.
- More at home, and with education in mind, I want NACCS to take a leadership role in combatting the mass banning of queer children's books, challenging the laws that ban so called CRT in institutions of learning, and finally making sure that the "Chicano Studies" included as part of new Ethnic Studies mandatory curricula requirements in some states is intersectional.<sup>6</sup> We have worked over these past 50 years to ensure

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<sup>5</sup> These incredible scholar-activists continue to lead us forward in print and action. See, for example Luz Calvo and Catriona Rueda Esquibel. *Decolonize Your Diet: Plant-Based Mexican-American Recipes for Health and Healing* (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2015); Devon Peña, Luz Calvo, Pancho McFarland, and Gabriel R Valle, *Mexican-Origin Foods, Foodways, and Social Movements: Decolonial Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Arkansas Press, 2017); Devon Gerardo Peña, *The Terror of the Machine: Technology, Work, Gender, and Ecology on the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Austin: University of Texas, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> See Ivory A. Toldson, "New Study Reveals the Anti-CRT Agenda Is Really about Denying Racism and Revising History," *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* 39, no. 16

Chicana/o/x Studies includes a diversity of voices, and we don't want this rich knowledge lost as our work becomes institutionalized for K-12 students.

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## Contributors

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**Nancy “Rusty” Barceló** is nationally known for her work on equity and Inclusion. She has served as President of Northern New Mexico College, Interim Vice President at Central Connecticut State University, among other administrative and academic roles at University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, the University of Minnesota, the University of Washington, and the University of Iowa. Barceló is recognized nationally for speaking and conducting workshops addressing equity and inclusion. She has received many awards, including the NACCS 2012 Scholar Award, the New Mexico Hispano Round Table “Walk the Talk” Award.

**Margaret Cantú-Sánchez** is a Visiting Assistant Professor of English at St. Mary’s University where she teaches composition and Latinx literature and culture courses. Her research focuses on decolonial pedagogy, immigration, border studies, and Chicana Feminist theory. As an instructor at a Hispanic Serving Institution, she strives to include multicultural texts in all courses. Her publications include approaches to teaching Latinx literature and theory. Her most recent publication, *Teaching Gloria E. Anzaldúa: Pedagogy and Practice for Our*

*Classrooms and Communities* offers inspiring ideas for the classroom and community utilizing Anzaldúa's theories and concepts.

**Olga Estrada** (They/She) is a fourth-year doctoral student in the Culture, Literacy, and Language program at UTSA. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Ethnic Studies from CSU- Fort Collins and holds an M.A. in Latin American and Border Studies from UTEP. She is currently a Democratizing Social Justice teaching fellow through an Andrew W. Mellon grant. As part of the department of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality, she teaches introductory courses in women, gender, and sexuality studies. As an Anzaldúan theorist, her research interest is centered on decolonial queer Chicana feminist epistemologies, theories, and teaching pedagogies. Her current research involves critical autoethnography to explore the experience of being a Queer Chicana/x in higher education. She has served as a summer graduate research assistant for the Mexican American Studies Teachers' Academy for three consecutive years. Olga is also currently an active board member for the Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship (AJAAS) and serves as a scholarship liaison. As a Joteria and Sucia/x scholar she has created a virtual queer conocimiento book club committed to cultivating accessible, identity-inclusive spaces to build community, critical consciousness, and collective awareness.

**Jesús Jaime-Díaz** is a first generation Mexican American/Chicano activist-scholar having earned a Ph.D. in Language, Reading & Culture with a Minor in Mexican American Studies from The University of Arizona. His research has previously focused on *testimonio* and critical ethnographic methods in exploring how Mexican American community college students in Oregon use their lived experiences to serve as a catalyst to "empower" them to pursue higher education. His research currently utilizes racialized social class as a unit for analysis in the schooling experience(s) of Mexican American students along the borderlands of Arizona. His scholarship is committed to examining how deficit ideologies are socially reproduced and derive from the early tools of socialization such as family legacies of immigration, language, work, education and religion. Dr. Jaime-Díaz's work interrogates such family origins which are interconnected to ideology and transmitted onto pedagogy. His work has been published in the *Ethnic Studies Review (ESR)*, *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal (AMAEJ)* and *The Journal of Latinos and Education (J. Lat. Educ)*. He currently serves as Recruitment/Outreach Coordinator- Instructor in the Secondary Education



Alternative Pathway Program, and is also an affiliate of The Education Policy Center in The College of Education at The University of Arizona.

**Josie Méndez-Negrete** is Professor Emerita in Mexican American Studies from the Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies (BBL), at the University of Texas at San Antonio, is a sociologist who received her PhD at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Duke University Press published her *Las hijas de Juan: Daughters Betrayed* as a revised edition in 2006 (reprinted in 2010). In 2015, the University of New Mexico Press published her second book, *A Life on Hold: Living with Schizophrenia*. In addition to publishing book chapters and articles on culture, identity, and education, Méndez-Negrete has actively promoted Mexican American Studies as a discipline at UTSA, and nationally, serving as its first dedicated hire and administrator for eleven years. From 2009 to 2014, Méndez-Negrete was the Lead Editor of *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of MALCS*. She also was chair of the National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) and Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS). Her most recent publication is *Activist Leaders of San José, California: En sus propias voces* (Arizona). As publisher of *Conocimientos Press*, her first publication focusing on women's issues, *Women, Mujeres, Ixoq': Revolutionary Vision*, ed. Claudia D. Hernández received the 2019 The International Latino Book Gold Medal Award. She continues to write and publish works by people of color in the United States.

**Alejandro Ollin Prado** is a Ph.D. candidate in the department of Chicana/o Studies and 2021-22 Ford Dissertation Fellow at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Alejandro's research areas of expertise consist of Political Economy, Critical Globalization Studies, Cultural Political Economy, Labor Studies, Urban Studies, Chicanx Studies, and Critical Environmental Justice Studies. His current dissertation project, *Chicanx Material Conditions: Chicanidad and the 'Rise of China,' Global Capitalism, and International Solidarity in 21st Century Los Angeles, California*, explores the relationship between 21<sup>st</sup> century Chicanx/Latinx communities in Los Angeles and China.

**Tess Pantoja Perez (She/They)** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Culture, Literacy, and Language program at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Her journey into academia began at the University of the Incarnate Word where she obtained a B.A. in Psychology, serving as an important catalyst for their interest in human behaviors and motivations. Rather than pursue a counseling trajectory, she branched out into the field of cultural studies and completed her M.A. in

Bilingual-Bicultural Studies from UTSA. Through the skillful guidance of their femmetor, professor emerita, Dr. Josie Méndez-Negrete, Tess dove into Anzaldúan scholarship, critical consciousness, self-analysis, and critical pedagogy. Their research interests are centered on academic culture and student experiences within higher educational settings with a specialization in QTBIPOC student populations. As an interdisciplinary scholar, Tess' research has also covered topics of sex and sexuality among Chicanas, embodied language learning, teaching adults English as a second language, and bilingual teacher education. She currently serves as president of the Texas Language Education Research (TexLER) conference and committee, a graduate student-led UTSA organization, and co-founder of Sucia Scholars, a non-profit educational research organization.

**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.

**Gabriella V. Sanchez** is a tenth generation Tejana, Ph.D. Candidate and undergraduate instructor in the Multicultural Women's and Gender Studies program at Texas Woman's University. Her dissertation utilizes intersectional historical analysis combined with archival methods to examine Black and Chicana educator activists in San Antonio from 1860-1960, and the consciousness necessary to create and practice ways of knowing and being that oppose colonial and white supremacist ideologies and structures while also creating possibilities for individual and collective resistance and liberation. From 2016-2018, Sanchez worked with *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of MALCS*, and now serves as At-Large Representative. She was recently awarded the [Wo]Mentoring in Graduate Education to support her work with Josie Méndez-Negrete – Chicana activist-scholar and professor emerita, and publisher of Conocimientos Press, LLC. As editorial assistant, Sanchez will learn a publishing and editing process rooted in Chicana feminist practices, critical conciencia (consciousness) and care.

**Luis Torres** is a long-time educator and administrator, having taught in higher education since 1972, first as a Graduate student and then as English professor. He attended the University of Colorado Boulder for his B.A. in English, becoming heavily involved with the United Mexican American Students organization and its Educational Opportunity Program. He received his M.A. and

Ph.D. in English from the University of Washington in Seattle. In 1995 he became Professor and Chair of Chicana/o Studies at Metropolitan State University of Denver. In 2006 he became Associate Dean in the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, and in 2008 Deputy Provost for Academic and Student Affairs. Dr. Torres served on the Board of the NACCS from 1990-1998 and as General Coordinator from 1992-1994. He is also a recipient of the National NACCS Scholar of the Year award, 2016.

**Amanda Tovar** (she/her/ella) is a Rio Grande Valley native--born and raised. She received her BA and MA from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Mexican American Studies. She is currently a third-year PhD student at the University of Texas at Austin in American Studies. Her academic research primarily focuses on the intersection of sexual violence and colonialism in the Rio Grande Valley, feminist epistemologies, and chisme as a lifeline. In the spirit of her homeland, she also focuses on South Texas identity formation via agriculture (namely the grapefruit), the creation of borders, and the practice of ancient philosophies in Latinx communities. Lastly, for fun, Amanda studies American tween television, popular culture, and the creation of “monsters” and how that relates to capitalism. Outside of academia she is a co-founder of Escuelín, a platform dedicated to cultivating space for disrupting "traditional" forms of education and emphasizing the knowledge all communities already possess. Amanda spends most of her spare time dreaming of better worlds, cooking and baking for friends and family, cuddling her dog (and husband), and finding new music to listen to on repeat for a month straight and then never again.