

## CHICANA FEMINIST PRACTICE: Community Accountability Coalitions in the University

Ana Clarissa Rojas Durazo, Audrey Silvestre,  
and Nadia Zepeda

*Chicana feminist and queer political subjectivities face a constant battle for their survival within the university. At California State University, Long Beach (CSU Long Beach), the collective Conciencia Femenil worked in coalition with Chicana faculty from Chicano/Latino Studies to create intergenerational Chicana feminist insurgencies toward dismantling institutional heteropatriarchal hierarchies. This article delineates the strategy of community accountability engaging different sectors of the university in our aim to contest and transform institutional violence.*

**Key Words:** *institutional violence, community accountability, Chicana feminisms, Chicano Studies, coalitions, intergenerational collective organizing*

**In the Fall** of 2009, the newly formed student collective Conciencia Femenil (ConFem) began working in coalition with Chicana Feminist faculty in Chicano/Latino Studies at CSU Long Beach, also known as Cal State Long Beach, in the planning of a Chicana feminists conference. ConFem, the coalition, and the the conference as well as this essay emerged out of a shared concern about a structured heteropatriarchal Chicano Studies and university that produced a hostile learning and working environment for Chicana feminisms and queer/trans Chican@s, inclusive of students and faculty. We set out to bring attention to the sexual/gender politics that organize power structurally and in every day practice through an inextricable paradigm of heteronormative and patriarchal dominance in Chicano Studies.

As faculty and students, we realized that working together in an intergenerational coalition across institutionalized “student” and “faculty” roles would prove vital in effecting change. Coalitional interactions increased our numbers—there were few of us—and gave us access to the various ways institutional spaces leverage change structurally, thereby enabling a response with a more thorough understanding of the institutionalized layers of heteropatriarchal marginalization across different structural locations. Working in coalition also multiplied our shared skills and wisdom across intergenerational experiences of surviving heteropatriarchy. When retaliations against our feminist insurgencies intensified the institutional violence, we turned to community accountability as a pivotal strategy to which to respond and to transform the multiple layers of violence.

We understand community accountability as praxis—sets of practices that aim for deeper social transformation of communities over what criminal, punitive, or individualized responses may offer (Chen et al. 2011; Rojas Durazo et al. 2012). We argue that, as entities or institutions of the State, public universities operate within dominant western and state responses to violence that criminalize and pathologize individuals as responsible for incidences of violence. These approaches inhibit deeper transformation of the institutional arrangements, practices and complicities that give rise to patterned and structured violence, thus limiting the possibility of significant social transformation (Rojas Durazo 2014). In an institutional setting, state institutions, including universities, generally respond to violence in ways that maintain the institution intact, rather than considering violence as an endemic manifestation of the institutional order itself. When students or faculty turn to the university for support, the university systematized response usually involves isolating an individual as the culprit or the victim while the everyday practices endemic and emergent through, requisite of, the structured institutional heteropatriarchal and racial formations, persists.

Before the retaliation and intensification of the violence, one of the organizing goals for the conference was to transform Chicano Studies. Because this organizational form often imagines itself as a community directly or indirectly connected to social justice struggles and the Chican@ community outside the university, we relied on community accountability as a useful strategy to guide the possibility of deeper social transformation we pursued.

With full understanding that Chicano Studies and the larger university itself were mired in colonial histories of racialized heteropatriarchal structures that targeted Chicana queer and feminist survival, let alone dissent, community accountability provides a turn toward other ways of engaging one another. We imagined a department and university that would not (re)produce further violence and would open the door to beginning the dismantling of heteropatriarchal hierarchy (Rojas Durazo 2014).

### **Racial Heteropatriarchy: Game Over!**

On March 17, 2010, *The Daily 49er*, the Cal State Long Beach newspaper, announced the Chicana Feminisms Conference in an on-line article. Shortly thereafter, violent homophobic and misogynist attacks against Conference “feminist” organizers and keynote speakers Cherrié Moraga and Alma López began appearing in the online comments section of *The Daily 49er*. One comment referenced an imagined Aztec law to justify and to specifically delineate the manner in which gay men and lesbians should be killed. Some of these comments were anonymous; however, self-identification or deducible identification through cultural signifiers revealed that the comments came from within our Chicano community.

The evening of the verbal onslaught, we gathered at Hot Java, a local queer Latino-owned café in Long Beach and began to plan a response strategy. We

immediately contacted the campus newspaper and asked them to remove the comments. We had been public about organizing the conference, our names were in the article announcing the conference; we were not only afraid for our lives, but we also wanted to stop further harm, to prevent future comments and the rampant display of heteropatriarchal violence from going unchecked. These comments further intensified the already hostile environment within which we studied, organized, worked, and lived—we lived in constant fear and doubt as to whom might inflict harm onto us. Their attacks referenced the sexuality of the organizers and speakers, which became a problem because some of us lived at home and were not out to our family or were in relationships with people who were not out. When these comments were published, we not only had to deal with being violently and publicly attacked, but we were now at risk of being outed to our parents, and for many of us risking not having a home as a consequence. Members of ConFem felt frightened by the intensification of homophobia.

Citing first amendment rights, the editors of *The Daily 49er* refused to remove the text, and denied our request to share with us information about who was posting these comments. The only way they would release any information was to file a police report because the police could access that information. Given multiple experiences with police harassment on and off campus, as well as the brutal experience of communities of color and law enforcement more generally, we were hesitant to file a report.

There was a moment when we felt very vulnerable, exposed, and frightened and decided not to press charges but to begin an investigation. We felt exposed and did not know if the person sitting next to us might have written the comments. Their anonymity and heteropatriarchal privilege provided them with the protection of attending an institution that privileges heterosexuality while leaving our queered/outed/othered bodies in public display. It was a difficult

and contradictory time; we were in fear of our lives but as activists who support the prison abolition movements, we were concerned that filing for an investigation by the campus police would further support the hyper-surveillance of brown bodies that feed the prison industrial complex.<sup>1</sup> In the end, we felt institutionally forced to file a police report.

Filing the report itself was an appalling experience as the officers did not know what or how to communicate with us or what protocol to follow. The campus police became yet another site of institutional violence. When we went to report our case, the officers asked us for California identification papers, which compromised the safety of undocumented students among us. The department's lack of response and their silence thereafter sent a clear message that the violence we experienced was not a priority for the university. Still, the report gave us leverage to pressure *The Daily 49er* to remove the comments.

The process through which we went taught us about the ways institutions—like the media, law enforcement, and the university—are intertwined and speak each other's language. Furthermore, as we engaged the campus police, we learned that the attacks were not isolated events on campus but rather a continuum of violence that festers due to the ways in which the institutionalization of heteropatriarchy and racism are embedded in the fabric of the university.

The experience with the University campus police, *The Daily 49er's* minimal response, and the bombardment of multiple attacks obligated us to think differently about how to respond to institutionalized violence, and we decided to write a response to *The Daily 49er*. We intended our response to provide context for the conference and to address the sexism and homophobia that appeared in their comments section.

As we wrote, we began mapping the multiple sites within and beyond the university where we experienced violence and the sites that were potentially roots, or sanctioning spaces, for the retaliatory violence after the conference. Mapping the multiple spaces on campus and beyond that produce and permit heteropatriarchal racial violence helped us think about the ways racism, sexism, and homophobia conjoin to produce this particular kind of racialized heteropatriarchal violence in the university as we lived it. We turned to community accountability as a proactive approach. “Heteropatriarchy: Game Over,” read our statement. Rather than surrender and condemn ourselves to the role of victim, which an institutional response beckons—a re-victimizing move—we took a leadership role as change agents in our communities, thereby reclaiming power that the attacks and the heteropatriarchal institutional structures aimed at stripping from us.

We saw ourselves as members of communities in which we loved or lived in but clearly perceived them as menacing to us. We wrote, “A movement that is not down for all of us is not down for its people,” and the statement became a kind of organizing strategy. We mapped organizational entities on and off-campus with which we would engage in community accountability processes: student organizations, Chican@/Latin@ Studies, Ethnic Studies and all academic departments, Women’s/ Gender Studies, the school newspaper, the university, and Chican@/Latin@ communities more broadly.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, we proceeded to meet and engage each group reaching for a set of goals we set for ourselves in a manner that considered their institutional role, the limits of transformation based on that role, and their various entrenched institutionalized racialized heteropatriarchal hierarchies.

### **Building Community**

Because racialized heteropatriarchy is embedded in the everyday practices of the university, wherever we turned for help, there was little to no response.

In most sectors of the university, as Chicanas we were ignored. We realized that we needed to build community beyond the university to break through the isolationism through which the university operates. We created an online petition and distributed it through our list-serve and through social media—Facebook and Twitter. The petition gained momentum and within hours, we gathered over two hundred signatures. Thus, going viral gave us needed support and showed us that we were not alone in our struggle. We no longer felt isolated. Also, we reached out for support to Communities United Against Violence (CUAV), to INCITE: Women of Color Against Violence, L.A. Chapter, and other community organizations that affirmed our efforts and helped us heal our wounds and reclaim our power. We broke the silence, since silencing is often used as a tactic to further marginalize those who have experienced violence. We made visible the reality that institutions will isolate us and divide us from our source of strength—from each other. By making the statement public, we were able to access support which multiplied our power to push back. Thus, when we set up meetings with folks to talk about our demands, we were no longer alone inside the university.

As previously stated, we are trained to respond to violence by blaming particular individuals who commit violent acts. We are trained to ignore the institutional and structural violence and the sociopolitical contexts that give rise to violence, sanction violence and permit violence. When we met with various sectors of the university, we kept hitting institutional walls that pushed us to pinpoint blame upon an individual. This response allows the rest of the institutional spaces and actors that produce and permit violence to walk away without accountability. We concluded that a community accountability approach was necessary to combat the multiple ways in which we experience violence and marginalization as we move from blaming one person to instead taking responsibility for the ways in which we all

participate in the perpetuation of heterosexism, homophobia, racism, and other forms of institutional violence.

Responses to violence often fail to recognize the continuum of violence that spans the range of emotional, psychological, physical and sexual violence. Legal and institutional responses often prioritize responding to physical manifestations of violence but as survivors of violence can attest, the wounds caused by psychological and emotional violence are profound and can also have physical effects. These forms of violence are often interrelated and a process like community accountability seeks to respond to all the dimensions of violence for deeper healing and transformation.

These threats and series of intimidating assaults were clearly aimed at deterring our organizing work, but instead of allowing this, we deflected and re-directed the violence by taking a proactive approach that brought ConFem closer as a collective. As we wrote and took action, we healed, grew stronger, and built community together. Because our primary commitment was to organize a response to the violence, the imposed categories of our positions in the university were relevant to our coalition in so far as they were useful and not beyond that and certainly not to hinder achieving our organizing goals. In praxis, we prioritized an organizer sensibility that shifted the university's intentionally divisive hierarchical ordering of students and faculty.

Our organizing in intergenerational coalition across institutional hierarchies in the university revealed that the ways the university recruits us to reinforce a hierarchical order. The university institutional structure depends on dichotomized roles that ascribe differential power between students and faculty in relationship to each other and the institution. The intergenerational/inter-role Chicana Feminist coalitional praxis helped us hone a deeper understanding

for the ways abuse of power emerges at multiple levels of the institution and for the kinds of practices that may transform that violence. When we engaged the university, we found marked institutional opposition at multiple levels of the university to the coalescence of coalitional consciousness and politics across hierarchized institutional roles. By working in coalition, we organized and recognized the need to organize across levels.

The coalitional form that prioritized organizing goals over institutional roles became a transformative space to practice just relations with a keen awareness of our humanity across these seemingly naturalized institutional hierarchies. Faculty working with ConFem saw students as fellow organizers first. We understood, we needed each other to survive, that there was no room for hierarchical dismissal of the knowledge, and wisdom and power students bring to the table. Still, faculty did not forget to offer their own experience and training along with taking responsibility to guide and mentor, but also recognizing the mutuality of knowledge and reciprocity of learning from fellow organizers. Students did not feel the weird power plays faculty can use, rather we felt a part of the group, not less than. Our power was on the same level as faculty because it was about what each of us brought to the table. We worked across these divides with great ease; in coalitional praxis we nurtured relationships built on trust and mutual respect, thereby morphing institutional violence into just relations.

### **Chican@ Studies**

Nonetheless, given what prompted us to organize in the first place, we were not surprised when our Chican@ community at CSULB began posting hateful homophobic and misogynist language. From its very foundation in 1968, the heteropatriarchal ordering of Chicano Studies has been so pervasive that these expressions are a clear outgrowth of its politics (Blackwell 2012). In

“Community Accountability: Emerging Movements to Transform Violence,” the authors offer an understanding of community as simultaneously “a systematically rationalized and defended location of unchecked violence” as well as a “deep well of resources and cultural references that sustain body, mind, and spirit” (Rojas Durazo et al. 2012, 5). They offer that in order to harness the community’s transformative potential away from violence, it is critical to “resist idealized protectivist notions of community that purport to lessen intra-community violence.”

In 2010, the coalition wrote the ConFem statement, which prioritized student voices as it requested immediate changes to address heteropatriarchal and misogynist culture in Chicano Studies. In one of the sections of the ConFem statement, we addressed the Chicano/Latino Studies department, inviting them to reevaluate their heteropatriarchal structures that created a hostile environment for women and queer folks. Specifically, we stated “the hate speech and violence expressed could very well have come from students of Chican@/Latin@ Studies.” We asked the department to seriously assess the ways in which content in the curriculum, in the classroom, in mentorship, advising, and any other aspect of the functioning of the department fosters an environment that gives rise to such ideas (Conciencia Femenil 2010).

We approached the department believing that change was possible and with the leverage of a widely circulated statement that helped foster the department’s sense of responsibility in the eyes of hundreds of Chican@ scholars who had signed onto the statement. Eventually, even the least likely Chicano/Latino Studies faculty signed on to the statement. Continuing our work, we offered examples of changes the department could implement to address and change its heteropatriarchal organization. We proposed a department name change from Chicano/Latino Studies to Chican@/Latin@ Studies. A name reflects

who you hold as your community and maintaining the name of the masculine state they are continuously perpetuating heteropatriarchal roots whereas Chicana@/Latin@ Studies disrupts this masculinist formation.

We proposed other suggestions including:

A Chicana@ Queer Studies course and a core upper division course on Chicana/Latina Feminism, that all courses address sexism, homophobia and heteropatriarchy [and] request that all courses in Chicana@/Latin@ Studies include significant content on Chicana/Latina and Queer Chicana@/Latin@ communities. (Conciencia Femenil, 2010)

We also had a section specifically addressing what the faculty in the department can do to address issues of sexism and homophobia within the department. One of our last suggestions for the department was to “take seriously, investigate, and make necessary changes to any concern raised by students, staff or faculty regarding sexism and homophobia” (Conciencia Femenil 2010). With the urgency to end a culture of silence that thrives on the impunity built into structured sexism and homophobia, our aim was to put in place a system that holds everyone accountable.

Rather than accepting our approach in the way it was intended, as one supportive of the Chicano Studies Department’s future, the male faculty responded in ways congruent with the ways in which heteropatriarchal politics play out in the United States, including in Chicano/Latino communities and in Chicano Studies. It was a kind of defense denial, caught in the subjectivity of victimization; Chicano movement folks and scholars have in the past and in this case again, responded to our concerns with heteropatriarchy as an

attack on them (the department). “Why the focus on Chicano Studies?” they asked. Their understanding of their own racialized subjectivity made it nearly impossible for them to consider themselves victimizers, to recognize their own power and the potential abuse and harm they were capable of wielding.

In one instance, a group of male faculty verbally assaulted a Chicana faculty colleague in a meeting for signing onto the circulating ConFem letter. For this reason and because the department took pride in being committed to the students, we decided the best strategy would be to have ConFem, the student collective, meet with faculty. At the meeting, the students brilliantly held their own and stayed on point, redirecting obvious attempts to derail the conversation and affirming the content of the statement and request for departmental action. As Chicana faculty, we were prepared to, and played a greater role than we expected, fending off a slew of attacks and attempts at demeaning the students.

As students from Chicano Studies, we were shocked at the reaction of male faculty when we brought up our list of demands. We were prepared to get some resistance, but could not believe the level of attacks on the Chicana faculty who backed up our statement. The demands we brought forth set out to create safer environments for all students and faculty. Many of us students who had dedicated much of our time at the university to Chicano Studies felt further silenced and marginalized within the department. We realized that the department only nurtured and mentored students who did not question heteropatriarchal roots within the department or the university.

Further fallout from the meeting included a campaign that became an all-out witch-hunt against Clarissa Rojas. Department leadership interrogated students and other faculty in order to assess her participation, which

they termed as a “collusion” with ConFem. Their efforts were as much an attempt to intimidate Rojas who did not have tenure, as it was to divide the coalitional work. However, they were not successful—we all saw through it and maintained constant communication about every movida they pulled. On another instance, a part-time Chicana faculty, who was part of the coalitional effort and shared an office with Rojas, was removed from her office by department leadership. This de-territorializing also targeted Rojas who was able to fend off attempts at taking her office because of her tenure-track status. They then tried to divide the coalition by preventing the same part-time Chicana faculty from coming to faculty meetings and eventually stopped re-hiring her altogether to teach in the department.

The coalition rather than the department’s heteropatriarchal structure were identified as the wrongdoers. Departmental faculty leadership then turned to attempting to divide ConFem and the students who had presented strongly at the meeting. They asked for meetings with just two students without the presence of Chicana faculty, which led to a series of intimidating meetings where students were interrogated about their organizing strategies, which were then belittled. However, their not so subtle attempts to derail student organizing did not work!

We persevered through the retaliation, and things began to shift. We started to see new changes implemented. The department began a process of changing its name. Most faculty revised their syllabi and added content that focused on Chicanas and Queer Chican@s; curricular discussions began to include gender and sexuality across most of the new courses developed. Among our biggest victories was a struggle that many Chicana students and faculty fought long before us. For twenty-four years, Chicanas had fought for a core course that focused on Chicana Feminist approaches to gender and

sexuality. Spring of 2011, the department voted unanimously to approve such a course.

In efforts to publicize our struggle, we also reached out to the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) requesting support. The 2010 Annual Conference in Seattle took place just a couple of weeks into the community accountability process and Rojas was scheduled to present a paper. She secured the support of the Lesbian, Transgender and Bisexual Mujeres Caucus and NACCS staff and leadership in drafting a resolution in support of the efforts underway. This was an important moment that offered up the possibility of imagining an extensive community of Chican@ scholars and scholarship that could inspire and create structures for further accountability from Chican@ Studies scholars and academic units.<sup>3</sup>

### **Student Organization**

We formed ConFem as a direct response to the oppressive heteropatriarchal roots of La Raza Student Association. Specifically, many of us involved in La Raza always felt fragmented, having to choose between our queer feminist politics or the heteropatriarchal Chicano cultura embedded in our student organization. There was no room within the organization to address intersectional issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. This fragmentation further created a culture of silence that did not allow us to address the misogynist and homophobic roots of the organization, which perpetuated violence. ConFem became that safe space where we could organize as queer Chicana feminists.

When the violent comments were posted on the school newspaper website, we had our suspicions that many comments came directly from members of La Raza. Specifically, one of the comments signed with the alias *Cuauhtli*, which

was known to be the symbol that La Raza used on their banners and t-shirts. Those of us who were organizing in both La Raza and ConFem constantly felt isolated and threatened by many of the Chicanos within the organization, so the comments posted to the newspaper were an additional indicator in addition to other kinds of harassment and intimidation tactics, that we were not welcomed in those spaces.

Since we were holding all sectors of our university accountable, we also needed to hold accountable the student organization that had nurtured us but also harmed us. We wrote “being part of student organizations, we have the responsibility to create a safe space for all students...we ask that careful assessment of the organization’s historical and current legacies of racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and classism be applied” (Conciencia Femenil 2010). Specifically “our... organizations have internalized a colonial politic of heteropatriarchy that keeps mujeres and queer members silently oppressed and out of key leadership roles” (Conciencia Femenil 2010). It would be difficult to build transformative change within these spaces of liberation without addressing the institutional violence.

Within our statement, we proposed a solution to decolonize the way we organized and “to create a process of accountability when there is abuse of power/oppression. This process would allow those responsible the opportunity to account for their actions and transform them” (Conciencia Femenil 2010). The process also outlined a way to provide support for those who were attacked, and to support their self-determination. Lastly, the process outlined possible steps to take in order to commit the organization to eliminating oppression.

We see the potential that student organizations have in creating a safe space for students of color who are trying to survive academia. Our intent with these demands was to take into consideration the intersectional experience of all

students. By addressing the heteropatriarchal roots that nurture institutional violence within our student organizations, we can begin to have dialogue and conversations leading to transformational student and social movements.

### **University and Campus Newspaper**

Our processes and approach with other entities of the university and the campus newspaper were different because we were not invested in these spaces as a result of the profound alienation Chican@/Latin@ students and faculty felt from both the university and *The Daily 49er*. When we set up meetings with university administrators to make our demands, it became clear to us that the university was a bureaucratic structure and hierarchical institution which made community accountability challenging. Our emails and phone calls to the president of the university (who oversaw the university's funding of the newspaper) went unanswered. We were instructed in the "chain of command" and were told to talk to the dean of students who was very sympathetic but made it clear that she couldn't really do much to address our situation. We did discuss with her the possibility of training sessions for incoming students on the topic of homophobia and sexual harassment, which we recommended in our statement and were implemented.

We had a better experience with the newspaper. In our statement, we wrote:

These requests seek to promote accountability in order to facilitate the school newspaper's ability to fulfill the policy of the university to provide an environment free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. An incident of hate violence is a mere reflection of systemic practices that conjure an environment that promotes the abuse of power and therefore the abuse of marginalized communities. Attempts to situate hate violence as isolated events deflect from the very social

mechanisms that create hate. Marginalized communities are routinely silenced and marginalized through media representation and through lack of representation in the hierarchical decision-making structures that govern the world, country, and our campus. Our voices are routinely excluded from the conversation. We believe that if the school newspaper demonstrated and expressed its commitment to honoring the voices of marginalized communities, they could both model the practice of justice and peace as well as create an environment that inspires accountability to these communities and prevents hate and violence. (Conciencia Femenil 2010)

The coalition met in-person more than once and discussed the matter over dozens of phone calls with the editor and the staff of the school newspaper and through that process we developed a relationship of accountability. The newspaper's particular framing of freedom of speech as the permission of hate speech made them initially opposed to removing the comments. Since they relied on constitutional arguments, we solicited legal assistance from allies to legally inspire them to budge on their interpretation. What began as an initial denial of our requests eventually turned into the implementation of our most serious requests: the development of a posting policy that stipulated the potential removal of posts/comments targeting individuals or groups. As this process unfolded, our concern grew for the harm these comments were producing for lots of people, so while the policy was in its early stages, we staffed the search for violent posts and indeed acted in the position that would become the newspaper staff's responsibility. As a result, the CSULB newspaper became one of the first in the United States to implement such a policy. In brief, the process led to setting a national precedent.<sup>4</sup>

### **Community Accountability Movements in the Making**

Our experience at CSU Long Beach suggests that Chicana feminist praxis and effective organizing on this ground requires a coalitional consciousness, politic and practice that is able to coalesce difference as imagined in university structures that promote the categories of student and faculty, for example, among many other asymmetrical and hierarchically articulated roles. This is not easy work, like any process of community accountability, that requires we also look at ourselves, at how we are reproducing and/or complicit in abusing hierarchical power. Our experience taught us that if we reproduce or participate in the violence imbued in institutional hierarchies, then we are legitimating and furthering heteropatriarchal and racial violence. Instead, the work of community accountability invites a kind of spiritual sensibility as well as one of political praxis that grows and moves through a deep concern and love for those we travel alongside, for those with whom we share the burden of violence and the possibility of social transformation. Community accountability asks us to honor and respect ourselves and everyone else, and in this way, community accountability is Chicana feminist praxis. It offers a possible way to walk the talk.

When we mapped and engaged the various sectors of the university, we began an intentional process to transform institutional spaces that sanctioned violence into spaces of growing accountability practice. Recognizing the mutual interdependence of institutional arrangements within the university, this shift helped create contiguous spaces of accountability (Rojas Durazo 2012). Creating more and more contiguous spaces of accountability helps to ensure that a greater number of us find ourselves learning, organizing, and working in spaces of accountability instead of spaces of permissibility.

Exactly one year after the coalitional efforts led to the initial Chicana feminisms conference, we invited Antonia Castañeda to the second Chicana/Latina

feminisms conference. Her work had given us the language to understand the Chicano community's historical legacies with violence. Four months later, Castañeda and Marie "Keta" Miranda, whose leadership at MALCS made it possible for our coalition to address these issues on a national scale, came together to create the coalition that formed the MALCS Subcommittee on Institutional Violence. While our work continues, we seek to create more bridges and structures of accountability between and within MALCS and NACCS, to bring growing attention to these issues at annual conferences, to continue conversations about using community accountability in the classroom, in our departments, in communities and in student organizations. These are movements in the making, and until all Chican@ Studies units are deeply committed to feminist politics, we will continue to pursue research and activism on heteropatriarchal institutional violence. We will continue to invite others and assess our own investments in heteropatriarchal institutional hierarchical structures. We have learned through experience that when it comes to the deployment of institutional violence, neutral posturing or disregard, or protecting careers over the wellbeing of others enables heteropatriarchal and racial violence. Therefore, we invite you to assess our story for how it may be relevant to your life and the place you call your institutional home, and we send blessings and light to the struggles you wage. May we all learn, grow, and transform so as to touch the meaning of justice within our very being and within our being with each other.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The "prison industrial complex" was introduced by activists and scholars to contest prevailing beliefs that increased levels of crime were the root cause of mounting prison populations. Instead, they argued, the prison construction and the attendant drive to fill these new structures with human bodies have been driven by ideologies of racism and the pursuit of profit. The notion of a prison industrial complex insists on understandings of the punishment process that take into

account economic and political structures and ideologies, rather than focusing myopically on individual criminal conduct and efforts to ‘curb crime’” (Davis 2003, 84–85).

<sup>2</sup>We are using the @ sign as both an inclusive term that makes room for folks that do not identify with a dichotomized masculine or feminine binary and as an intervention that ruptures this dichotomy. As Sandra Soto defines it in *Reading Chican@ Like a Queer*: a “nonalphabetic symbol for ‘at’ disrupts our desire for intelligibility, our desire for a quick and certain visual register of a gendered body” (Soto, 2010, 2–3). When we use the term “Chicano” we are referring to the heteropatriarchal communities. We use the term “Chicana/o” when referencing communities that identify themselves with the “a/o” and we contest that split as it marginalizes those of us that do not fit the gender binary.

<sup>3</sup>The retaliation escalated to such a degree that the coalition decided to put the resolution on hold to prevent further retaliation but the relationships and conversations throughout the process helped build a broader community of solidarity that would be key for future work both NACCS and the MALCS Ad-Hoc Committee on Institutional Violence would forge with regard to the issue of heteropatriarchal institutional violence in Chican@ Studies.

<sup>4</sup>This action became viable through the support of then UCLA Law School Student and INCITE L.A. member Katie Ojeda-Stewart who toolled us with the necessary legal information to challenge the newspaper’s framing of hate speech as free speech.

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