

EDITORS' COMMENTARY

Thriving en el Desierto de Arizona: Embracing Activism in the Pursuit of Justice

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We are deeply honored to serve as the Co-Lead Editors of *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of MALCS* and to have it hosted by Arizona State University. As long-time malcistas, we proudly stand on the intellectual legacies, political commitments, and collective activism of our predecessors. Bringing the journal to Arizona State University was no small feat, but the story parallels the larger story of Arizona, that is, one of “pushing back” against repressive forces interested in maintaining historically-embedded power structures. We say “thriving in Arizona” because these regressive forces have been and continue to be challenged, as everyday people and activists take to the courts, the streets, community halls, and classrooms to counter the implementation and ideological ramifications of such hegemonic interests.

As we enter this new era, we need to remain conscious of maintaining alliances and coalition work, for the issues that brought us to the table in a former era remain virulent. The journal is but one space carved from the struggles against exclusion and marginalization. Our scholarship, creative work, and art, matter. The work that gets published in the journal intervenes in the social transformation we seek. In this vein, and with the responsibility we have been given, we strive to strengthen the dialogue between each other and the larger feminist communities.

The story behind bringing the journal to ASU is one of feminist alliances; in effect, after 7 years of submitting proposals to no avail, we were fortunate

that our feminist vision received backing from a feminist colleague. The promotion of our Director, Marlene Tromp, a scholar of Victorian Literature and Women and Gender Studies, to the position of Vice Provost and Dean for New College ensured the journal would have a new home at Arizona State University. On July 1st, on her very first day at her post, she signed the Memorandum of Understanding with MALCS and we were on our way to the new, exciting and daunting responsibility of co-editing the journal. All the while, we were supported in spirit by our colegas across ASU's four campuses, and these same women are now members of our ASU Colectiva. We look forward to working with Editor of Creative Writing and Commentary, Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson and Book Review Editor, Linda Heidenreich, the new and returning members of the National Advisory Board, the Editorial Board, and members of the MALCS community. Adelante!

Historical Memory, Mestiza bodies, and Agency

The essays included in the first section of this issue expand our understanding of nation and citizenship by articulating complex views of mestizaje in the past and in the future, and both in México and the United States. Mestiza bodies, in these articles, are not limited to the Spanish/Indian mixture; rather, mestizaje is expanded to include Japanese Mexican identities and Cyborg bodies. Cordelia Barrera, in her essay "Cyborg Bodies, Strategies of Consciousness, and Ecological Revolution in the México-US Borderlands," examines 21st century ecological revolution as portrayed in Alex Rivera's 2008 dystopic film, *Sleep Dealer*. The film, "disrupts twenty-first century projects of modernization that systematically contribute to the erasure of poor, marginalized communities via dehumanizing labor practices." Applying theoretical frameworks developed by Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, Chela Sandoval, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Anne Balsamo, Barrera focuses on mestiza/o bodies and cyborgs as they transform from colonized subjects to

empowered ecological revolutionaries. Even though cyborgs are constructed to maintain unbalanced power relations between the United States and México, and corporate/military power and indigenous/mestizo rights, mestiza and cyborg subjects become liberators who initiate ecological revolution.

Barrera argues that this ecological revolution stems from a series of transformations and re-constructions of colonized identities. Such actions are the result of the recovery of historical memory and transformation of the self. For Barrera, *Sleep Dealer* shows the potential of “memory as a form of cultural resistance.” The ecological revolutionary actions engaged in the film offer a model of survival not linked to corporate and profit models. The power of new forms of consciousness and subjectivity, then, are not just theoretical musings but result in agricultural practices that are sustainable, linking the past to a sustainable future.

In a very different context, Selfa Chew, in her essay “Mexicanidades de la Diáspora Asiática: Considerations of Gender, Race, and Class in the Treatment of Japanese Mexicans During WWII” shows the power of historical memory and transformation of the self in her study of the Japanese Mexican relocation program during WWII. Not only does she bring attention to this obscure and seldom-discussed piece of Mexican history, but she also expands the construction of Mexican citizenship and identity in the context of a non-traditional mestizaje. In doing so, she argues that Asian immigrants in México created hybrid identities that challenged hegemonic ideas of nationality, citizenship and mestizaje.

Chew’s article is significant because her focus speaks to the strategies that Japanese Mexican women deployed in order to carve a space for belonging. Such processes resonate with that undergone with transnational communities

today. As Chew concludes, conscious acceptance of multiracial identities and mexicanidades opens the possibilities for stronger communities and coalitions. Both essays highlight the power that subaltern communities have to exercise their agency in the pursuit of social justice.

Mapping Geographies of Self: Woman as First Environment

The uniqueness of the 2014 MALCS Summer Institute cannot be overstated; the beauty and uniqueness of the landscape and the people of Northern New Mexico made this a most memorable institute. Indeed, we were in “The Land of Enchantment” in Northern New Mexico College’s historic El Rito campus. Faculty, staff, students, and administrators welcomed us with warm hearts and remarkable hospitality. Between the breathtaking landscape of the Rio Grande River and the Sandía and Sangre de Cristo mountains, the summer monsoon storms, and the generosity of our hosts, like so many of the sites where the Summer Institute has been held, the site was also in the midst of deeply historical and contemporary conflicts. The Institute forged ahead and good work was done.

For the first time in the Summer Institute’s history, we gathered in a rural area. The theme of the conference “Mapping Geographies of Self: Woman as First Environment” was very suitable for an institute that was designed to link mind/body/spirit. As the site committee explained, the theme “brings together Gloria Anzladúa’s concept of ‘the geography of the self’ and Mohawk activist and mid-wife Katsi Cook’s ‘woman is the first environment’” (MALCS Summer Institute Program 2014, 3). This framing brought discussion and conversations around a diversity of topics including food production, sustainability, gender, sexuality, education, testimonios, spirituality, and health and well-being.

The summer institute gives us an opportunity to see old friends, make new ones, exchange ideas, and renew our commitments to each other and our work prior to the commencement of the new academic year. As *malcistas* we gather together to listen to new scholarship, engage in the exchanging of innovative ideas, participate in professional development and creative workshops. In addition to these activities, the 2014 Summer Institute also included weaving workshops and el Taller de Coyolteadas facilitated by Alicia Gaspar de Alba and Alma López, on “sneaking Chicana feminist/lesbian theory south of the border with Coyolxauhqui at our backs” (MALCS Summer Institute Program 2014, 12). The program featured Nanibah Chacon’s artwork, a Diné (Navajo) and Chicana artist originally from Gallup, New Mexico, whose critical work and presence throughout the Institute inspired one and all.

The facilitation of this year’s Writing Workshop transferred to outgoing Editor, Josie Méndez- Negrete, from her predecessor, Karen Mary Davalos. Josie used *conocimiento* to establish a feminist ethos of collaboration and guide the six women participants of the workshop. We briefly joined the group, introduced ourselves, and encouraged the participants to submit their work to the journal and continue the successful pathway toward publication. The workshop continues to be a major vehicle by which women are mentored into achieving a publication with *Chicana/Latina Studies*.

Nothing brings you closer to the land than rain. New Mexico’s monsoon storms brought much needed water to a land suffering from drought. Rain cleans the land and air, it helps with spiritual renewal. The speakers featured in the Plenary Sessions heightened our spiritual awareness for the land and the rain. Shash Yázhí Charley inspired us to connect with our bodies,

hands, wombs, and heart and reminded us to be in community with each other and our hearts. Beata Tsosie-Peña encouraged us to bond with the land as a pathway to peace and to listen to the historical trauma inflicted upon the earth. The proximity of Los Alamos brought the urgency of land and environmental issues to the forefront.

As Chicana and Indigenous feminist scholars we seek to engage in decolonial research practices in the service of our multiple communities, but we must be cautious on how we do our work. Patricia Marroquín, Director of the Newberry Library D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies, and the first Indigenous woman to hold that title, reminded us of the reasons why we document our stories and maintain our traditions. She asked us to interrogate how and why we document the stories we collect and preserve. Inés Talamantes, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, honored her ancestors. Returning to their land offered her a sense of place and power. She also cautioned us about the purpose of our research when we do it only to promote our careers. As women of knowledge/women of cariño, she strongly but gently reminded us, “No se peleen,” for we must always remember to act with respeto towards each other. Through her presentation on decolonization, narrative memory, and the violation of intellectual property, Margo Tamez, Professor at the University of British Columbia, historicized the construct of the border in very important ways, challenging us to rethink the layers involved in claiming a discourse around the border. In a similar vein, Julie Lucero, Associate Scientist I at the University of New Mexico, Gloriana Trujillo, Program Coordinator at San Francisco State University, and Camilla Bustamante, Dean of Community and Workforce Development at Santa Fe Community College challenged us to incorporate and engage questions such as: what are Chicana, Native, and Feminist Sciences?

Words of thanks to the site committee are insufficient and we want to do justice to the hard work, creativity and hospitality we received from all. A mil gracias to Nancy “Rusty” Barceló, Chair, María Dolores Gonzales, Co-Chair, Patricia Trujillo, Co-Chair, Gabrielle Amster, Julianna Barbee, Kena Chavez, Brandi Cordova, Brook Espinosa, Janelle Garcia, Ana X Gutiérrez Sisneros, Sandy Krolick, Brenda Linnell, Liddie Martinez, Matthew Martinez, Sally Martinez, Stephanie Montoya, Amy Peña, Cecilia Romero, Kathleen Sena, and Verna Trujillo. Rusty Barceló, President of Northern New Mexico College has been behind the hosting of more MALCS institutes than anyone else and each have spoken to the MALCS mission. We want to convey a special gracias, as well, to the co-chairs, María Dolores Gonzales and Patricia Trujillo for their wonderful hospitality and hard work. Andy Romero, and Northern New Mexico College facilities and IT staff, worked tirelessly to help with logistics and problem-solving throughout the institute.

Always a highlight for the Summer Institute is the Tortuga Award Dinner. The Community Award was given to Tewa Women United, a collective of intertribal women’s voices in the Tewa homelands of Northern New Mexico. Founded in 1989 as a support group for women concerned with alcoholism, suicide, domestic, and sexual violence, Tewa (“we are one”), creates a safe place for the transformation and empowerment of women and works to end all forms of violence against women in Northern New Mexico. A lifetime achievement award was given to 90 year-old Antonia Apodoca, a gifted musician and songwriter who is one of the most prominent female elders in Northern New Mexico.

Keeping the secret that Josie Méndez Negrete would receive the Tortuga Award was not an easy feat, but we managed to keep her guessing. This was a most apt award, as she ended her 5-year tenure as Lead Editor of *Chicana/Latina Studies*.

She was recognized and thanked for her strong leadership, for securing a home and funding for the journal from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Her dedication strengthened the state of Chicana/Latina studies scholarship and fortified the practice to mentor undergraduate and graduate students. As a scholar-activist, she embodies MALCS feminist principles.

The site committee aptly reminded us, “with our voices, our bodies, our spirit, and our work, we will transform, inspire and empower one another.” As *Chicana/Latina Studies* enters a new phase at Arizona State University, we will work steadfastly to bring Chicana/Latina and Indigenous women’s voices, scholarship, art, creative work, commentaries, and reviews to the MALCS community, the academy, and the larger community.