

Editors' Commentary

Karen Mary Davalos and Alicia Partnoy

The tragic conditions of victims and survivors, the stories of children separated from their parents and guardians, and the media hype about looting in the aftermath of the hurricane in Louisiana disturbed us while finalizing this issue. We were shocked by what masses of African Americans, Afro Latinos, and Latin American immigrants have endured while the nation-state failed to respond to their pleas. We were astonished at the criminal incompetence exhibited by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Today we are still enraged at the inaction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the growth in military spending and the correlative defunding of the Gulf Coast infrastructure, and the setback to labor rights for low-income workers after the temporary suspension of federal minimum wages while rebuilding the region.

However, a certain feeling of exhilaration at the final stages of our editorial work helped us deal with anger and pain. It is true that there is great joy in the realization that our job is almost done, *de que casi podemos acariciar esas cubiertas tan únicas que nos brindan nuestras artistas visuales*, that we almost feel the crispness of pages shedding wisdom, fun, beauty. We know that we will soon be awed again by Ashlee Goodwin's display of creativity. But we truly bask in the revelation that a common thread binds together cada ejemplar. The issue you are reading today, for example, is about space. The authors record and analyze the ways women of color create a homeplace out of virtually nothing—to record memories, to acknowledge, and to celebrate, as Rosalía Solórzano Torres does, their racialized and gendered bodies. Chicanas/Latinas create our own spaces, produce knowledge, and invent new modes of human

dignity. We do this with and without permission as Rose Rodriguez does when she decides to grab her two worlds with her own hands. We take over cyber-space as Dora Ramirez-Dhoore notes about artists Laura Molina and Bianca Ortiz. Our quest is clear in Juana Suárez's article highlighting Marta Rodriguez's persistent plea for national and historical recognition when the Colombian filmmaker documents the lives of indigenous women and laborers. Todas hablamos aquí de espacios liberados, espacios de dolor, espacios desde donde nos posicionamos para enfrentar el status quo. Take for instance the space that the character in Nora Strejilevich's story is searching, or the space demanded by Lara Medina para las Chicanas y Latinas católicas bajo el reinado de quien siempre las ha excluido, Benedicto XVI. This issue is the space that Norma Alarcón can claim as hers to work as a poet, activity *non sancta* in the realms of academia. In these pages, Elizabeth Rodriguez Kessler turns to psychological and literary analysis to reclaim the ideological space for Malintzin. Fighting in Bolivia, Florentina Alegre reminds us that our bodies are utterly abused by those seeking power when we are just seen as masses that occupy large spaces on the streets, regardless of our wishes and aspirations. Always we have been inhabiting spaces, occupying land and libraries, or moving to higher (moral) ground. Our claim for space will continue. Our rootedness allows the social and corporeal body to thrive. As Ramirez-Dhoore notes, "this is about embodiment and survival."

As we go to press, we want to dedicate this issue to all the victims of Hurricane George in every Gulf around the world. We are thinking especially about the people that are kept invisible from the TV cameras because of fear and discrimination: the hundreds of thousands of undocumented families from Honduras, México, and El Salvador who live in Louisiana and who are afraid that asking for help would increase their vulnerability.