

EDITOR'S COMMENTARY:

Words to Heal

Patricia Trujillo

This note comes to you from inside the Newberry Library, where I have been on fellowship for the last month. Part of my work here has been identifying women's voices, specifically *Genízara* voices, through archival work. In my search, I have been surrounded by fierce contemporary women scholars, by the voices of women speaking to me "from the shadows" of the male dominated archive, and by my own ancestors whose names I've encountered in my search for more stories. These voices kept me company as I spent my time searching for women in the collections, where, frankly, there were very few. In the quiet of researching documents, I found myself asking over and over: Who tells our stories? Where are the archives of Chicana/Latina/Indígena stories?

This is my inaugural issue as the creative writing editor of the *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social* and I was honored to read the submissions in my off-time from archival research. From inside one of the nation's oldest research libraries in the Humanities, my surroundings framed my reading. The connective themes you will read in this volume emerged from the voices of Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous women from around the country. They got me thinking about historic grief and how we heal; about carving out spaces for ourselves in all discourses, including new ideas and perspectives on how walls impact our daily lives; about how walls can have imaginative worlds of their own; about how as women of color, we are constantly negotiating the third spaces between fact and fiction to tell our stories.

My arrival at the Newberry coincided with unsettling news of police violence on the cusp of the national political conventions. Before heading to the library one morning in July, I turned on CNN to see the video shot by Diamond Reynolds. Ms. Reynolds filmed the murder of her boyfriend, Philando Castile, at the hands of a Minnesota law enforcement officer. In witnessing this video, I was filled with rage at the injustice of the shooting and anguish for Ms. Reynolds, her daughter, and her family.

I walked into the archives and felt listless, wondering if my work or any literary research mattered on that particular day when the material circumstances of Black Lives are what matter (on all days). I allowed myself a moment of self-care, a moment to journal my thoughts and feelings about violence and archives, and archives of violence. It dawned on me that in creating the recording of her boyfriend's death, Ms. Reynolds had the strength to tell her story and start an archive. In spite of having a gun pointed at her, she had the courage to hold up her smart phone and (non-violently) point back.

I acknowledge the terror that Ms. Reynolds experienced is one that most of us will never fully understand; may no other woman have to face down the barrel of a gun with a camera, a laptop, or a pen. In the context of Ms. Reynolds' radical act, reading the stories, creative essays, and poetry submitted to the journal reaffirmed the courage it takes for women of color to collectively tell our stories. Our stories point back. Our stories fill in the blanks of history.

The journal had an overwhelming response to our call for submissions for this volume—over two dozen manuscripts! We hope to continue building the enthusiasm for submissions in all genres—including SciFi, Recipe Essays, Photohistoria, Memoir, Mixed Genre, Comics, etc. and for thinking about thematic calls like Healing from Historic Grief and Violence, Environmental

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and Land-based Writing, or Chicana Utopic literature. If you have ideas, please share them with me at ptrujillo@malcs.org.

Blessings to the Reynolds and Castile families, and to all families impacted by state violence, as we all heal from the violence inflicted on us, on our communities, and the well-being of Mother Earth and all her inhabitants. May our words be an offering on our collective path to healing.