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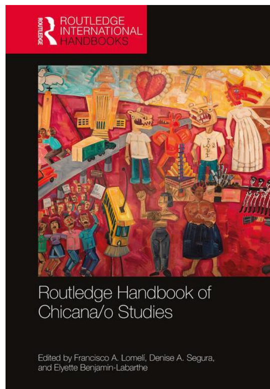

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Francisco A. Lomelí, Denise A. Segura, Elyette Benjamin-Labarthe

The landscapes and languaging of Chicana feminisms

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The landscapes and languaging[1] of Chicana feminisms

Aída Hurtado

Introduction

Chicana feminisms as an area of study was first brought to light in 1977 with the publication of Martha Cotera's book *Chicana Feminisms*. In this short monograph, the seeds that had accumulated from many years of actions and writings by Chicanas in various fields are presented and theorized upon by Cotera. In her incisive analysis she lays out the experiential basis (or sitios) for developing new discourses (or lenguas) that encapsulate the feminisms developing on the ground as Chicanas articulated their oppression at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. This powerful new theory was later termed "intersectionality" by legal scholar Kimberleé Crenshaw (1991).

In this chapter, I begin with a brief overview, based primarily on Cotera's influential monograph, including the importance of history, of the theoretical paradigm proposed in the field of Chicana feminisms. Chicana feminisms is ultimately a theory of liberation for all. I follow this discussion with an illustration of how Chicana feminisms are deployed in Chicana art and performance to produce social justice (Dávalos 2008; González 2014; Pérez 2007). Early Chicana feminist organizers used art as un sitio (a space) to articulate an incisive critique of gender relations in Chicano/a communities, with a specific focus on the sexism present in the Chicano movement (Broyles-González 1994). Following this early tradition, there are now a group of "artivistas" (artist activists) who consider art production and performance an integral part in furthering the social justice agenda in Chicana feminisms (González 2014).

The importance of historical representation in Chicana feminisms

One entrée into a critical dialogue on gender relations is to examine the omissions made in historical accounts. For writers searching to build a field around gender issues, the documentation of the excluded history of women's participation in various political mobilizations was one avenue for the construction of Chicana feminisms. Alma Garcia's book *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, together with the interventions by Vicki Ruiz (1987) and Patricia Zavella (1987), reconstituted the political mobilization in labor organizing and in the Chicano civil rights movement, especially the role that women played in the events leading to social justice for Chicana/o communities. Ruiz followed her early book (1987) on Chicana

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cannery workers with *Out of the Shadows* (2008), a comprehensive history of Chicanas as historical agents that became an instant classic. Emma Pérez's *Decolonial Imaginary* (1991) documented the participation of Chicanas in the interstices of nationalist movements to propose a "third space" where the dispossessed can enforce their agency on behalf of social change. Most recently Maylei Blackwell, with her book *Chicana power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (2011), based on the oral histories of participants in the movimiento, has followed the tradition of early Chicana feminist historians in creating un sitio (a space) to voice the neglected history of Chicanas' political, social, and economic participation in the construction of progressive movements and in their contribution to the growing multiculturalism of the United States.

Essential throughout the writings and actions of Chicana feminists is the commitment to class struggles. The founding of the Chicana feminist organization, MALCS[2] Declaración explicitly states:

> We are the daughters of Chicano working class families involved in higher education. We were raised in labor camps and barrios, where sharing our resources was the basis of survival. Our values, our strength derive from where we came. Our history is the story of the working class people – their struggles, commitments, strengths, and the Chicano/Mexicano experience in the United States. We are particularly concerned with the conditions women face at work, in and out of the home. We continue our mothers' struggle for economic and social justice. The scarcity of Chicanas in institutions of higher education requires that we join together to identify our common problems, to support each other and to define collective solutions. Our purpose is to fight the race, class, and gender oppression we have experienced in the universities. Further, we reject the separation of academic scholarship and community involvement. Our research strives to bridge the gap between intellectual work and active commitment to our communities. We draw upon a tradition of political struggle. We see ourselves developing strategies for social change – a change emanating from our communities. We declare the commitment to seek social, economic, and political change throughout our work and collective action. We welcome Chicanas who share these goals and invite them to join us.
>
> *Adopted June 1983 (http://malcs.org/?s=mission+statement)*

The MALCS mission statement underscores what early Chicana feminist activists and writers from the 1970s had recognized; namely that Third World struggles are not independent of the class, gender, ethnic, and race struggles of Chicanas and Chicanos in the United States (Vásquez 1971). The recognition of sexuality as an integral aspect of the "matrix of domination" (Collins 2000) came later as more and more queer-identified voices articulated other distinct forms of oppression, including Moraga's and Anzaldúa's iconic edited text *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981). The commitment from the beginning of its inception to fight multiple oppressions made Chicana feminisms particularly distinct from hegemonic, white feminisms, which were based primarily (and many times solely) on gender (Jaggar 1988).

Intersectionality at work: multiple oppressions, multiple constituencies

The dedication among Chicana feminists to address all sources of oppression and exclusion is aptly captured in Arredondo's and her co-authors' (2003) proposal, which states that the Chicana feminisms paradigm can be best conceptualized as a glorieta (roundabout), with the inquiry and writings in the field addressing diverse audiences to avoid exclusions. Arredondo, Hurtado, Klahn, Nájera-Ramírez, and Zavella claim this term captures much of the multiple engagements

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of Chicana feminists as women living and working in an intellectual glorieta, a space that centers on the Chicana experience and is a standpoint from which to engage in dialogue with different audiences and participants. The avenidas (avenues) that we face in the glorieta allow Chicana feminists to make assessments of power in relation to our varied locations. Like a Mexico city glorieta, the dialogue is fast-paced, fluid, and flexible, at times unnerving; it forces intellectual dexterity. Such agility is foundational to the Chicana feminist political project, which intervenes in important ways to raise consciousness and further the struggle for decolonization against multiple oppressions (Arredondo et al. 2003, pp. 2–3).

Chicana feminisms are characterized by "finding absences and exclusions and arguing from that standpoint" (Hurtado 1998, p. 135). Arredondo and her colleagues claim that "Chicana feminist writings move discourse beyond binaries and toward intersectionality and hybridity" (2003, p. 2). Their work is "grounded in our understanding of power as relational" and "working toward an explanatory matrix that confronts the shifting boundaries of discourse and captures ties to lived experiences" (p. 2). The Chicana feminist project aligns itself with Anzaldúa's notion of "Chicanas' bodies as bocacalles."[3] Literally, bocacalle translates as an intersection where two streets cross one another (p. 2). Because Chicana feminists speak and live in complex social realities constantly crossing borders – physical and metaphorical – they situate their writing in multiple constituencies. Working within this standpoint can be arduous because it entails consideration of multiple debates and critiques. Chicanas strategically engage and move fluidly among different social formations, always risking the consequences of not aligning themselves absolutely with any of them (Arredondo et al. 2003).

By focusing on exclusions based on multiple markers of stigma and oppression, Chicana feminisms move beyond absences based on gender and advocate for those who are denied entry based on a multiplicity of variables, hence opening up a theoretical aperture, which has become foundational to the theory of intersectionality (Hurtado & Sinha 2016). The understanding that women around the world are subjected to multiple sources of oppression was first documented by activists addressing the practical issues and needs of racialized women (Collins 2000). Obviously, the feminisms developed by such influential figures as Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinem in the 1960s could not be applied without modifications to women in war-torn countries in Latin America, for example, who were subjected to economic deprivation as well as rape and other gender-specific oppressions resulting from political upheaval, historical circumstances, and social and cultural oppression (Menchú 2010). This was also true among African American women in the United States, whose disadvantages had as much to do with their race as with their gender (Collins 2000).

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) focused on the nonlegal, societal structures that colluded to create the same phenomenon as that noted by Chicana writers and activists, which she called the "matrix of domination." As originally defined by Collins:

> Intersectionality is an analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape Black women's experiences and, in turn, are shaped by Black women.
>
> *(2000, p. 299)*

Central to Collins's analysis is the premise that societal structures are formed and sustained to exert power over people of color in general and over African Americans in particular. As she views the matter:

> The very notion of the intersections of race, class, and gender as an area worthy of study emerged from the recognition of practitioners of each distinctive theoretical tradition that

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> inequality could not be explained, let alone challenged, via a race-only, or gender-only framework. No one had all the answers and no one was going to get all the answers without attention to two things. First, the notion of interlocking . . . oppressions refers to the macro-level connections linking systems of oppression such as race, class, and gender. This is a model describing the structures that create social positions. Second, the notion of intersectionality describes micro-level processes namely, how each individual group occupies a social position within interlocking structures of oppression described by the metaphor of intersectionality. Together they shape oppression.
>
> *(Collins 2000, p. 82)*

Since the late 1980s, Chicana feminist scholars have positioned themselves at the forefront of intersectionality theory by proposing specific feminisms that take into account culture, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and, most recently, masculine gender as it pertains to the historical and cultural circumstances of Chicanas in the United States (Flores 2000; Hurtado & Sinha 2008; Vásquez 1971).

Intersectionality and borderlands theory

A pivotal theoretical addition to Chicana feminisms has been the work of Gloria Anzaldúa – writer, public intellectual, and one of the first Chicanas to publicly claim her lesbianism (Moraga & Anzaldúa 1981). Anzaldúa wrote extensively on borderlands theory before her untimely passing at the age of 61. Expanding on W.E.B. Du Bois's (1903) idea of double consciousness, Anzaldúa applies borderlands theory to the experiences of Chicanas growing up in South Texas on the border between the United States and Mexico (Martínez 2005). According to Anzaldúa (1987), the border between these two countries is a metaphor for all types of crossings – be they geopolitical boundaries, sexual transgressions, social dislocations, or the crossings necessary to exist in multiple linguistic and cultural contexts. Anzaldúa (1987) locates the geographical border between the United States and Mexico as the source of her theorizing. As Hurtado summarizes:

> The history of conquest, which basically layered another country over a preexisting nation, gave Chicana feminisms the knowledge of the temporality of nation-states (Klahn 1994). The political line dividing the United States from Mexico did not correspond to the experiential existence on the border. Chicana feminists declare the border as the geographical location (lugar) that created the aperture for theorizing about subordination from an ethnically specific Chicana/mestiza consciousness.
>
> *(Hurtado 2003b, pp. 17–18)*

This "outsider within" status produces a layered complexity within Chicanas' sense of self that is captured in Anzaldúa's concept of mestiza consciousness, as summarized by Hurtado:

> It was at the border that Chicanas/mestizas learned the socially constructed nature of all categories. By standing on the U.S. side of the river they saw Mexico and they saw home; by standing on the Mexican side of the border they saw the United States and they saw home. Yet they were not really accepted on either side. Their ability to "see" the arbitrary nature of all categories but still take a stand, challenges Chicana feminisms to exclude while including, to reject while accepting, and to struggle while negotiating. . . . The basic concept involves the ability to hold multiple social perspectives while simultaneously maintaining a center that revolves around concrete material forms of oppression.
>
> *(Hurtado 2003b, p. 15)*

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Although Anzaldúa developed borderlands theory by examining her experiences as the daughter of farmworkers living in extreme poverty in South Texas, the theory also applies to all types of social, economic, sexual, and political dislocations. Anzaldúa's insights help us understand and theorize about the experiences of individuals who are exposed to contradictory social systems and develop what Anzaldúa termed "la facultad" (ability or gift) – the notion that individuals (primarily women) who are exposed to multiple social worlds, as defined by cultures, languages, social classes, sexualities, nation-states, and colonization, develop the agility to navigate and challenge linear conceptions of social reality. Other Chicana feminist writers have called this ability "differential consciousness" (Sandoval 2000), perception of "multiple realities" (Alarcón 1990), "multiple subjectivities" (Hurtado 2003a), and a state of "concientización"[4] (Castillo 1994).

The focus within Chicana feminisms on social justice for all summons a commitment to change structures of oppression without "ranking the oppressions" (Moraga & Anzaldúa 1981). Chicana feminists are acutely aware of the interconnectedness of all oppressive social structures and are therefore more likely to engage in what Sandoval (2000) calls a "differential mode of consciousness," whereby they shift from one intersectional identity to another (according to the apertures in social structures), creating opportunities to engage in political struggles. Chicana feminisms use relational analyses of power (Hurtado 1996), which approach various oppressions in non-hierarchical ways (Moraga & Anzaldúa 1981). By utilizing intersectionality as a tool to examine the simultaneity of multiple oppressions, "all claims of oppression [are taken] seriously in order to dismantle the existing status quo" (Hurtado 2003b, p. 263).

The increasing importance of Chicana feminist writings inside and outside of the academy validates the power of this intellectual production in advancing the serious work of dismantling patriarchy.[5] The tools implicitly, if not explicitly, claimed for this purpose are not the usual masculinist avenues of social change – armed struggle, civil unrest, guerrilla warfare, or even non-violent protest. Instead, the mainstay of Chicana feminisms' claims towards social justice has been accomplished through intellectual production (inside and outside the academy), art, community empowerment, solidarity movements with other political formations, electoral politics, transnational political mobilizations, and other avenues for the reconstruction of a more-just society. In the forthcoming section of this chapter, I focus my discussion on the art production and performance proposed by Chicana feminist writers for the creation of social change.

Artivistas[6]: La Virgen as symbol for political and social change

Mexicana/o and Chicana/o communities were devastated by the 1848 colonization of the Mexican territory known now as the American Southwest. Many of the research and written efforts of the Chicano movement and Chicana feminisms uncovered the elided history of Mexican descendants (and other people of color) in this country (Castañeda 1993; Ruiz 2008). Memorialization included revisioning official history and reconstructing everyday Chicana/o and Mexicana/o cultural practices. Chicana feminist writers and artists have been at the forefront of reconstituting/re-signifying (Sandoval 2000) religious and cultural rituals for the restitution of self, which has led to political mobilization and community empowerment (González 2014).

Chicana feminists refuted the predictions of assimilation theory (also present in white feminist theorizing), which claimed that as Chicanas became more liberated, they were more likely to resemble white, middle-class feminists. Instead, Chicana liberation was constructed in the context of Mexicana/o and Chicana/o culture – modified, reconstructed, analyzed, criticized, and ultimately recycled through a feminist lens (Vásquez 1971). Chicana feminists brought into

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the archive a "history of their own," to paraphrase Virginia Woolf, through music, paintings, performances, and writings, thus providing social-political frameworks for memory (Pérez 2007).

A powerful and persistent example is the re-signification of La Virgen de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe), the national saint of Mexico and iconic figure of "Mexicaness" (Dávalos 2008; Gaspar de Alba & López 2011; Pérez 2007). In 1975 Ester Hernández became the first artist to "liberate" La Virgen in "La Virgen Defendiendo Los Derechos Humanos" (Our Lady defending human rights)[7] [http://americanart.si.edu/images/2013/2013.56_1b.jpg], which depicts La Virgen as a karate fighter. The work has been acclaimed as a "groundbreaking piece" that "established the beginning of a Chicana/o artistic tradition of recuperating the Virgen de Guadalupe in a humorous" fashion and as a "symbol of defiance" (Mesa Bains in López 2011, p. 276). Hernández followed this work with "La Ofrenda" (the Offering) (see image at: www.esterhernandez.com/images/ester-art/1348158304_10-LaOfrenda-72dpi.jpg),[8] an art piece that caused considerable controversy by portraying what many critics saw as a lesbian with a tattoo of La Virgen on her back. Adding to the polemic, "La Ofrenda" was the cover image used in the first edition of Carla Trujillo's (1991) edited book *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About* (López 2011).[9] The artist Yolanda M. López painted other variations of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Her series depicts different facets of Chicana working-class subject positions – from the quintessential abuelita (grandmother) (see image at: https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/20/5c/25/205c25e185eef3ed238719bd3f001bbe.jpg)[10] to the oppressed factory worker to an athlete with her skirt billowing around her (http://faculty.pasadena.edu/mnjimenez/topic4b_gallery/images/topic4b_15.jpg).[11] Each image reasserts diverse working-class subjectivities under the aegis of Our Lady of Guadalupe that depart dramatically from her traditional pose as the mother held sacred by the Catholic Church (Dávalos 2008).

In 1997 Ana Castillo edited *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*, a book of essays by Chicana feminist writers highlighting the importance of La Virgen to Chicana womanist/feminist views of self, including sexuality. Included in the edited book is the essay, "La Virgen de Guadalupe and Her Reconstruction in Chicana Lesbian Desire," in which Carla Trujillo makes La Virgen her lover. Sandra Cisneros, in her essay, appropriates La Virgen to refute the image of la madre sufrida (the suffering mother), replacing it with La Virgen as "sex goddess":

> When I look at *la Virgen de Guadalupe* now, she is not the Lupe of my childhood, no longer the one in my grandparents' house in Tepeyac, nor is she the one of the Roman Catholic Church, the one I bolted the door against in my teens and twenties. Like every woman who matters to me, I have to search for her in the rubble of history. And I have found her. She is Guadalupe the sex goddess, a goddess who makes me feel good about my sexual power, my sexual energy, who reminds me I must, as Clarissa Pinkola Estés so aptly put it, "[speak] from the vulva . . . speak the most basic truth," and write from my *panocha* [cunt].
>
> *(Cisneros 1996, p. 49)*

The re-significations of La Virgen have not received universal approval; they have however, invited different constituencies to re-examine Mexicana/o and Chicana/o culture and to widen their lens from the binary of acceptance or rejection to critically reassess this body of artwork through the prism provided by Chicana feminist production.

The most famous/infamous controversy surrounding the re-signification of La Virgen was actually inspired by the words of liberation in Sandra Cisneros's essay quoted briefly. The national controversy erupted when Chicana artist Alma López's digital portrayal of La Virgen was exhibited at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico (see image at: http://sfreporter.com/santafe/imgs/media.images/10081/lopezalmaourlady_.jpg).[12] Various

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newspaper articles described López's representation of La Virgen as the "bare-midriff Mary" (Benke 2001b), "bikini Virgin" (Benke 2001a), and, less inflammatory, "a computerized photo collage of Our Lady of Guadalupe wearing a two-piece swimsuit of bright roses" that also featured "a barebreasted angel holding the virgin aloft" (Janofsky 2001, p. 27A).[13] To non-believers, the image "seems rather innocuous," but for many devout observers, especially in the predominantly Catholic state of New Mexico where it was exhibited, the art piece "caused such an uproar that museum officials say they have been threatened with physical harm and state law makers have suggested that the museum should lose some of its funding" (ibid., p. 27A).

Where many saw offense and blasphemy, artist López stated that, as a Catholic, she was showing La Virgen "as a strong woman 'and not as the young, passive' more traditional image with head bowed and hands clasped" (Janofsky 2001). López explained that the angel's bare breasts represented "beauty and nurturing" (ibid.) and that the art piece, as mentioned previously, was inspired by another Chicana feminist, Sandra Cisneros, who "in one of her stories wonders what Our Lady of Guadalupe wears underneath the mantle" (Gonzales & Rodríguez 2001). López, in her interpretation on canvas, concluded La Virgen was wearing roses.

At the time of the controversy Alma López was a member of an artist group called Cyber Arte[14] that, instead of rejecting their culture or damning it as reactionary and sexist, engaged head-on, as many Chicana feminists do, with the controversies generated by their re-signification, even when the consequences were as serious as receiving "death threats," as López did. She felt that:

> when I look at the image of the La Virgen de Guadalupe, I see a complex activist revolutionary cultural icon. To me, she is the poster image for the first successful act of mass nonviolent civil resistance/disobedience on this continent. Like the Aztec moon goddess Coyolxauhqui, La Virgen de Guadalupe needs to be deciphered and *re-membered*. Hundreds of years of conquest and Catholic misinformation shifted her meaning. She documents the spirit of indigenous resistance. We witness this spirit of resistance resurface throughout our Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicana/o history.
>
> *(López 2011, p. 247)*

Alma López is not unique in risking her well-being for the sake of a Chicana feminist agenda. The same risks have always existed for Chicanas who rebel and do not accept the restricted social-cultural spaces assigned to them by society in general and by enforcers in their own communities. Such backlash is documented by Maylei Blackwell (2011) in her book on feminist organizing in the 1970s and earlier in Cotera's (1977) monograph, in which she covers both the men who supported feminist organizing and those who vehemently labeled Chicana feminists as "lesbians" or Chicanas with the "white woman's" disease (Del Castillo 1974). A central question then is, why do Chicana feminists pursue such dangerous dynamics? Why not instead create art that is outside the confines of their culture and communities, a move that could lead to greater acceptance and success in the mainstream art world? Part of the answer lies in Chicana feminists' commitment to the generation of knowledge as a site (or sitio) for social, cultural, and economic transformation; ultimately, dispersion as a primary source for liberation.

The circle of knowledge production: multiple sitios to communicate in multiple lenguas

Chicana feminisms did not develop a body of work only to increase the representation of women in various social spaces. The study of gender and its workings provided an aperture

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into the power arrangements existing in all societies. Ultimately the objective of the Chicana feminist project was to dismantle power and its oppressive effects on all involved. Through the process of analysis, dialogue, community organizing, political mobilization, art production, performance, and writing, Chicana feminisms aimed to create a theory of liberation that would benefit both men and women of all races, ethnicities, and sexualities in the United States and globally. That is quite a tall order, which has spurred the impressive intellectual, cultural, and artistic production of a still-developing area of study.

Chicana/o Studies as a discipline and Chicana feminisms as an area of study are possibly the only two major intellectual fields in the academy whose genealogy is firmly rooted in the ethos and practices of racialized, poor subjects – migrants/immigrants, farm workers, laborers, those not formally educated, culturally different, linguistically diverse, and peoples colonized on their own lands. Chicana feminisms take this genealogy as foundational to knowledge production in whatever avenues they use inside and outside the academy. Of primary importance is the re-signification of working-class Chicano/a culture, language, and art production (Díaz-Sánchez & Hernández 2013; González 2014; Ybarra-Frausto 1989) by deconstructing the power relations in the United States that assume that all things Chicana/o are inferior, not worthy of study, and not central to the production of knowledge. Instead of privileging knowledge produced in the academy (and staying within the academy), Chicana feminists examine and re-signify their working-class foundations, then return these ideas to the community to encourage questioning of their own positionings.

Chicana feminist production is therefore circular; the grounds for excavation are the communities many of the writers, artists, and performers come from – poor, working-class communities in barrios, labor camps, and migrant trails. Chicana feminists carry their unadulterated prior experiences into their education (primarily in English), using them as fodder for their imaginations, theorizing, and intellectual products. They rework their concepts into accessible forms and return them to their communities, various constituencies, and multiple audiences to create enlightenment and, hopefully, to affect the psychological, social, political, and economic materialities of Chicana lives (and, more generally, all lives). The circular circuit of knowledge production through various artistic and intellectual forms is the telos of Chicana feminisms.[15]

Let's consider the controversy discussed previously of Alma López's re-signification of the La Virgen, which caused such an uproar in various communities. The controversy could have remained restricted to certain privileged quarters; for example, only people who had access to print and Internet media. Given the "silo" aspect of art and academic production, López and her group could have dismissed the controversy and moved on to other subjects that would not generate such strong sentiments. Instead, the Chicana feminist community at large took up the cause and defended López's work.[16]

In response to the attacks on López's representation of La Virgen, Chicana feminist Patrisia Gonzales wrote a syndicated column in which she interviews Raquel Salinas, the model who posed for Alma López's image. Raquel's participation was also a feminist intervention, intended to help her heal from a rape attack at the age of 18, after which many close to her "made her feel shame and told her it was God's punishment. Guilt-ridden, she was made to believe it was she who precipitated her own rape" (Gonzales & Rodríguez 2001). The lack of support from family and friends was one of the factors that led Salinas to alcohol abuse and "caused her to cover herself up – to hide her body, her curves . . . her femininity" (Ibid.). According to Patrisia Gonzales, Raquel Salinas led a double life. Fiercely proud of her heritage, she became politically active at a young age. She witnessed the raw brutality of police officers against protestors at the East L.A. Chicano Moratorium in 1970. "When I saw that brutality, I committed my life toward fighting injustice." Yet, through all the political movements she participated in, she was always

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silent about her rape (Ibid.). Salinas began her healing process when a woman friend told her, "It wasn't your fault. You didn't ask to be raped" (ibid). Salinas took up modeling for art classes at the University of California, Los Angeles, to discard her "guilt around her body." The image created by Alma López was a culmination of sorts for Salinas, who after the turmoil caused by the controversy came to adhere to an "indigenous spirituality that views Our Lady of Guadalupe as Tonantzin – her common name in Náhuatl – meaning 'Our Most Venerable Mother'" (Ibid.).

There was yet another layer of feminist intervention to Patrisia Gonzales's column. Only a month before she covered the López and Salinas controversy, Gonzales had written a moving account about her own traumatic rape at the age of 25 (Gonzales 2001a). After its publication, she received hundreds of emails and letters from women who had undergone the same violence. Roberto Rodríguez, her then-husband and co-author of many columns and books, wrote a reaction to Patrisia's account, explaining his feelings about the violation of his wife and witnessing her continuing pain (2001). He connected Patrisia's pain to his own experience of being brutally beaten by the Los Angeles police, over which he sued and won a substantial economic settlement. Rodríguez readily admitted that the violation Patrisia suffered was greater than his trauma; still, he periodically experienced post-traumatic syndrome as a result of the police beating.

Artist Alma López, writer Patrisia Gonzales, and model Raquel Salinas (with sympathetic partners) critically embraced Chicana/o and Mexicana/o culture, engaging different constituencies to recognize regressive elements in these communities, and, through mutual struggle, created circles of dialogue. Art, creative writing, personal and critical essays, and interviews are all geared towards the goal of raising the level of understanding of controversial issues within Chicana/o communities. Patrisia Gonzales noted with pride that she wrote about the "Our Lady" controversy and the tale of Salinas, who posed for the image to heal herself as a rape survivor. One reader responded that her 83-year-old grandmother, given the context, found a new meaning in the art: "Now I understand. The artwork should stay in the museum" (Hurtado 2003b, p. 291).

Chicana feminisms make conscious that which is taken for granted because it has become naturalized through cultural practice. The "taken for granted" silences of Chicanas as well as other women were essential to maintaining their invisibility. By making dialogue and disruption essential components of intervention, Chicana feminists invite others to further deconstruct their situations (Arredondo et al. 2003). In the case of the López controversy, Roberto Rodríguez's engagement with Patrisia Gonzales's commentary created ever-widening ripples of analysis that culminated in the concientización of a devout, Catholic, 83-year old abuelita (grandmother) who eventually understood why Alma López's representation of La Virgen is not blasphemous (Gonzales 2001b). The ongoing process of deconstruction of hierarchies is propelled by the ultimate goals of developing awareness and creating a just society.

Intersectional Chicana feminism: towards a theory of liberation

Ultimately, Chicana feminisms are about engaging in political struggle for liberation. Chicana feminisms offer practical applications by creating knowledge that can aid in the creation of coalitions across lines of difference for the purpose of political mobilizations on behalf of social justice. As Anzaldúa reminds us:

The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundations of our lives, our culture, our language, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and

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collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war.

(Anzaldúa 1987, p. 80)

Chicana feminisms is a "living theory" (Trujillo 1998a), with young scholars, performers, and artists evolving the tenets of the theory and applying it to new artistic and political expressions. An example is Martha González, who describes herself on her public website as:

> I am a Chican@ Artivista, PhD, feminist music theorist and an Assistant Professor in the Intercollegiate Chican@ Latin@ Studies Department at SCRIPPS/Claremont Colleges. This website is designed to feature the different facets of my artistic, community, and academic work. Please look around and leave some feedback. Thank you for visiting!
>
> *(González 2014, p. 87)*

González is a songwriter, performer, and member of the Grammy Award–winning group Quetzal; she is also an academic. There are no separations between her community of origin (Los Angeles, California), the musical knowledge she obtained in her family's native country (Mexico), the education she has achieved (a doctorate), and her artistic and academic production. Every aspect of her life is fully integrated.

Most recently González has participated in and further developed a method of collective song writing with U.S. and Mexican women, who, with one exception, had never written original compositions. González's year-long project called "Entre Mujeres" (Among Women) was a transnational effort to create a space, a kitchen space more specifically, for women to gather, depending on their availability given their childcare and home commitments, to create music. González theorizes that hegemonic structures of music production often exclude women because they fail to recognize women's restrictions due to familial arrangements and obligations. By purchasing affordable and mobile recording equipment through a grant, which also provided funds for her and her family to relocate to Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico, for a year, González was able to have women from the United States and Mexico come together in her kitchen to create and record music. The results are recorded on a CD entitled "Entre Mujeres: Women Making Music Across Borders," which is based on original music created by the women in the project and includes their observations on pregnancy, childrearing, and life in general.

González proposes that songs are sung theories that can further our understanding of women, as well as the creative process:

> A song as a sonic and literary manifestations is life's sound-scape, a unique cathartic memento, and a powerful political tool. Without question, a song is also an important historical text. A person's *testimonio* (testimony), life views, triumphs, aphorisms, and struggles can be expressed in song lyrics. In this way, song lyrics can be viewed as knowledge and theory. Multiplied by community, they can be a powerful exercise in consensus and collective knowledge production.
>
> *(González 2014, p. 78)*

González has held similar workshops (Sounds Beyond Barriers) with male and female youth in juvenile detention centers. She includes boys because, as Anzaldúa admonishes, "que no se nos olviden los hombres [let us not forget the men]" when creating social change.

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González, together with a group of artists, produced a video after spending a week at the King County Juvenile Detention Center located in Seattle, Washington. Together with the incarcerated youth, the artists produced three songs utilizing the Sounds without Borders collective process developed by Mayan Indigenous communities in Chiapas, Mexico in collaboration with Chicana/o artivistas from East Los Angeles, California.[17] The artivistas involved in this project have found that the process of creating music lends itself to personal reflections and transformation because when writing a song collaboratively, the youths tend to be more open and engaged with one another resulting in the development of a critical consciousness that often leads them to examine the behaviors, values, feelings, and circumstances that led to their detention in juvenile hall. This can be the beginning of changing their circumstances.

In another Chicana artivista political and creative product, Lady Mariposa (Lady Butterfly), a poet, uses spoken word to express her feelings about gender oppression and resistance to patriarchy. In her poem, "My Reality is My Poetry" on the 2010 CD *Spoken Word and Borderland Beats*,[18] she states:

> My reality is my poetry. . .
> I weave loomlessly beyond the expectations of my family.
> I weave poemas that sound like barbacoa on Sunday after martinis on Saturday.
> I weave loomlessly, a story of a life not hindered by my parents' desire to become abuelos (grandparents).
> Loomlessly, stories of a life beyond the real estate secretaria de la gringa que hacía y hacía y no pensaba, no pensaba.
> (Loomlessly, stories of a life beyond the real estate secretary of the White woman who does and does and doesn't think, doesn't think.)
> Beyond the next husband that used to call me puta (whore).
> Beyond the next suegra (mother-in-law) I never punched in the face.
> All of this is my story.
> My landscape is that landscape of many girls like me that married and never escape, and when they did they brought along babies.
> Girls that never imagined that life without that chokehold that is co-dependency and that pinche gusano that "marry me and marry me, and love me and marry me and marry me."
> And this is how I weave my landscape.
> This is how I adorn my temple with American possibilities and Mexican memories.
> With Mexican love songs and American jazz.
> With education that showed me the world.
> With education that gave me the words.
> To weave my mother's lessons into a reality that is me – una lady.
>
> *Lady Mariposa (2010)*

Lady Mariposa's self-produced CD begins with an introduction that lays out her trajectory marked by the restrictions of her gender imposed by society, her family, her community, and herself by internalizing gender restrictions rather than following her inner voice. Lady Mariposa grew up in the same geographical area as Gloria Anzaldúa, in the small town of Sullivan City, Texas, only 51 miles from Anzaldúa's homeland – but 40-some years later. Despite their different time frames and ages, Lady Mariposa's experience of gender restrictions was very similar to Anzaldúa's; it took higher education to catapult both of them out of their cultural "captivity" into their self-awareness as writers.

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In Lady Mariposa's case, the "girl culture" of the Río Grande Valley dictated her "co-dependency" on a husband who did not understand her and her writing ambitions, compliance to her parents' wishes to see her married and raising a family, and secretarial work that required conformity and lacked intellectual challenge. She lays out her circumstances fully for the listener to understand where she is "coming from" and the genealogy of her writings. In doing so, she claims un sitio y una lengua (a space and a language) as a feminist writer who will not be made to feel shame for a patriarchy she did not create and that she finally escaped. Lady Mariposa, as an independent artist who leaves the cocoon created by patriarchy, flies away and transforms from a gusana (larvae) into a full-fledged mariposa; she becomes an example for other young women living in rural Texas (or any other geographical space of restriction). As predicted by Chicana feminisms, education *and* art become Lady Butterfly's ticket to liberation.

Conclusion

In writing a theory of liberation, Chicana feminists put all their hopes in one basket – they had infinite faith that intellectual production inside and outside the academy would revolutionize ways of thinking and ultimately generate a differential consciousness that would reconstitute social reality and gain the traction necessary to change the world. And indeed Chicana feminist writers have attained their goal of transformation, including transformation for men in their communities (Hurtado & Sinha 2016). Chicana feminist writers have transfigured higher education through their writings, even while many of them wrote outside the academy. Furthermore, their theory of liberation advocates changing consciousness through education and through non-violent political engagement. Multiple *testimonios* (testimonies) from multiple constituencies verify that the first part of their liberation theory has indeed succeeded. The next phase of Chicana feminisms will have to answer the question of whether the transformation of consciousness will lead to new forms of social relations that will result in liberation for all.

Notes

1 In this chapter I follow Professor Sonia Saldívar-Hull's lead in refusing to italicize or otherwise mark the shift between English and Spanish in the first few chapters of her book *Feminism On The Border: Chicana Gender Politics And Literature* (2000, p. 173). She urges non-Spanish readers to experience the disjuncture felt by many monolingual Spanish speakers, especially children, as they enter mainstream circles not understanding English. Similarly, D. Inés Casillas refuses to italicize Spanish words in her book *Sounds of Belonging: U.S. Spanish-language Radio and Public Advocacy* (2014) because she does not consider the Spanish language foreign given Chicanas/os' history of colonization. Likewise, the Spanish phrases in this chapter are not italicized.

2 MALCS, Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (Women Active in Letters and Social Change), is the largest Chicana feminist organization in the United States. According to the MALCS website:

> Chicana/Latina women were an integral part of the activities collectively recognized as the Chicano Movimiento, most active and visible from 1964 to 1975. By the early 1980s their contributions were barely acknowledged. Sensing this collective loss of voice, feeling highly isolated, eager to extend their knowledge to other women, and desiring to change society's perceptions, a group of Chicana/Latina academic women gathered at the University of California, Davis, in spring 1982. Mujeres Activas En Letras Y Cambio Social (MALCS) was established at this first meeting. The MALCS declaration, written one year later at the Berkeley campus, formally established the organization and affirmed the membership's dedication to the unification of their academic life with their community activism.
>
> *(http://malcs.org/herstory/)*

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3 Gloria Anzaldúa asserts in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, "Su cuerpo es una bocacalle (her body is an intersection)" (1987, p. 2).

4 Castillo expands Paulo Freire's notion of concientización to include gender. The intrinsic connectedness of the individual's experience and the sociopolitical structure in which the individual exists is a fundamental tenant of liberation psychology and is referred to as concientización (critical consciousness or politicized awareness). Introduced by Freire, the idea is that an individual's behavior is not a result of intrapsychic processes as proposed by traditional psychologists; behavior is the result of individuals operating within oppressive and alienating social structures. Martín-Baró argued that the awareness of concientización brings with it the understanding that individual psychology cannot be understood without addressing the social structures that contribute to a psychologically distressing environment for oppressed communities.

5 See as an example the excellent work of Rafael Solórzano, a graduate student at the University of California, Los Angeles, who produced a five-minute video on Chela Sandoval's iconic text *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000). Cultural studies and philosophical writers heavily influence Sandoval's text. Solórzano translates the difficult concepts to an illustrated video for consumption by students and community organizers (https://vimeo.com/122843854?outro=1). This "movida" (move), in Sandoval's terms, creates a circle of understanding between the academy and the community for the purpose of creating social justice.

6 Artivista combines the words art and activism to signify the act of creating art as part of an activist move to create social change (Sandoval & Latorre 2008). As elaborated by M. K. Asante:

> The artivist (artist + activist) uses her artistic talents to fight and struggle against injustice and oppression – by any medium necessary. The artivist merges commitment to freedom and justice with the pen, the lens, the brush, the voice, the body, and the imagination. The artivist knows that to make an observation is to have an obligation.
>
> *(Asante 2009, p. 203)*

7 See image at: [http://americanart.si.edu/images/2013/2013.56_1b.jpg] accessed July 8, 2017.

8 See image at: [www.esterhernandez.com/images/ester-art/1348158304_10-LaOfrenda-72dpi.jpg]. Accessed July 8, 2017.

9 According to Laura Pérez, Hernández received a death threat because of the portrayal of La Virgen in her silk screen "La Ofrenda" (2007, p. 264).

10 See image at: [https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/20/5c/25/205c25e185eef3ed238719bd3f001bbe.jpg]. Accessed July 8, 2017.

11 See image at [http://faculty.pasadena.edu/mnjimenez/topic4b_gallery/images/topic4b_15.jpg]. Accessed July 8, 2017.

12 See image at: [http://sfreporter.com/santafe/imgs/media.images/10081/lopezalmaourlady_.jpg]. Accessed July 8, 2017.

13 To review the extensive details of the controversy, see: http://almaLópez.net/ourlady.html.

14 Cyber Arte "features computer-inspired work by contemporary Hispana/Chicana/Latina artists, all of whom intentionally combine elements traditionally defined as 'folk' with current computer technology to create a new aesthetic. Artists include Elena Baca, Marion Martínez, and Teresa Archuleta Sagel" (López 2001).

15 Graduate students Aracely García-González, Paulina Ramírez Niembro, Alejandro Prado, and Mariano Nava identified this circular process of knowledge production in Chicana/o Studies as a tree that is fed by the Chicano community, which in turn bears fruits in the academy and is then returned to the community for nurturance (class presentation, Chicano Studies 200C Social Processes, spring quarter 2016).

16 Alma López writes that she did receive many supportive emails and missives from the community. However, one of the most disturbing incidents involved López receiving an anonymous envelope with about 15 handwritten letters inside signed by children who had been instructed to write hateful messages to López (López 2011, 282).

17 For Gonzalez's description of the entire process the reader is referred to: www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3kOzhGJshc. The Sounds Beyond Barriers workshop was made possible with support from the Jubilation Foundation and the City of Seattle Office of Arts and Culture.

18 The author and co-editors thank Veronica Sandoval, Lady Mariposa, for granting permission to quote from her poem "My Reality is My Poetry" on her 2010 CD, "Spoken Word and Borderland Beats," excerpts of which can be found at: (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qph9TIXfkbY. The video clip was recorded in 2010 but gives a sense of the power of Lady Mariposa's spoken words.

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