

*The* **JOURNAL** *of*  
**LATINA CRITICAL FEMINISM**

**Volume 3 • Issue 1**  
**February 2020**

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# **THE JOURNAL OF LATINA CRITICAL FEMINISM**

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# Preface

## What is the Journal of Latina Critical Feminism?

The journal will provide a voice for the articulation of feminist and social justice concerns from a Latina perspective, broadly construed to include Latinas in the U.S., Latin America, and other countries.

The journal will be an online, open access, blind peer-reviewed academic journal that will include narrative and poetic entries as legitimate forms of scholarly feminist analyses.

The basic normative commitment of the journal is to expand the analysis of the ways gender relates to social justice in its multiple forms, including a critical examination of intersectionality, the role that men and women play in oppressing animals and the earth, and the complex connections between minority cultures and the oppression of women.

We particularly encourage submissions that draw from our indigenous values, norms, and perspectives to articulate views of sociopolitical, economic, and natural environments that promote the mutual well-being of human and nonhuman species.

The journal wants to explore the social justice implications of different forms of gender and sexual identification, including gay, lesbian, transgender, pansexual, bisexual, and other forms of sexual identity.

The journal welcomes articles that discuss ways in which feminist struggles can be systematically integrated with broader social justice issues. In particular, we believe that to achieve its true potential as a revolutionary transformational force it is important for feminism to support a planetary ethic that expresses moral concern for all inhabitants of the earth community, understood in intergenerational terms.

We construe feminism broadly to include gender analyses that examine the ways men, particularly minority men, can be oppressed by patriarchy.

Articles should as far as possible use language that is understandable and accessible to wide audiences and avoid obscurantist and convoluted terminology that conveys a false sense of profundity. Also, the journal will include poetry, experiential narrative accounts, and other forms of creative expression.

Perhaps most of all, the journal will strive to exemplify the highest standards of intellectual and moral integrity and fairness. We believe that the true potential of feminism will never be realized unless these ideals are fully embraced and implemented.

# Poetry

# can I trace my depression to grieving breast milk?

**By Sara Karim**

daughter to a fatherless daughter

plucked out feathers  
limp wings  
sucking on  
a placid  
teat

father tyrant  
father silent  
father-free

in a room with no bed frame  
no door  
no window

birthed to expectations  
for a faceless  
earless  
figure

thank you!  
for this grief  
this prosperity  
this exhausted life

I count these blessings  
on my burned fingers

# Your Tia Finds You Un Taxi Seguro

By Cynthia Guardado

*San Salvador, El Salvador*

*My taxi driver Don Pedro waits  
for me outside la Alcaldia de  
Santa Tecla—  
guards lean against walls  
rifles resting on hips.*

*La gente siempre anda con precau-  
ción— en la Capital es muy peligroso  
recoger gente en la calle says Don  
Pedro.*

This district desolate except  
for the occasional  
call of a voice sits in darkness.  
We drive away. The market place sleeps—  
the energy of shuffling vendors no longer  
lingers. A clap can be heard releasing &  
we try not to think of guns  
instead we listen to tarps snapping in the wind.

—

On our first drive together, Don  
Pedro squints his eyes— cres-  
cent moons fixed  
in the rearview mirror. He tells me  
his wife is from Buena Vista  
the village of my childhood.

I ask his wife's name:  
*Lilia*, he says.  
& I know the 'L's long 'e'  
the *lee lee aah*  
taking root in my memory, fa-  
miliar to my tongue

like pickled radishes—  
the color still changing.

Under the shadow of night  
near Metro Centro  
the lights brighten like billboards.

—

He speaks of the four years  
he spent in Los Angeles—I imagine  
our arms gliding past each other  
on a crowded street, my parents tugging  
at me while a pigeon nests  
on a statue. Don Pedro notices me

as if I were the child he left behind in  
El Salvador & right then  
he must miss the sigh  
of his wife's hum in the kitchen.

—

Outside el Hospital de Chalatenango, Don  
Pedro meets my parents.  
We are caught in some kind of  
odd union again:

strangers a few weeks ago  
& now he listens to us cry

over the groan of his engine.  
We tell him my tio is dying. He  
searches for gentle words like  
we're friends he's known for  
years. It rains hard,

& my sister who is going  
back to Los Angeles  
sobs in the back seat of his car.

The fifty kilometers ahead of us swell like  
the distance between two countries.

# For The Mother Of My Half-Mexican Children

By Juan Pérez

You sure aren't a Mexican  
Yet here you are, marching at my side  
Shouting "¡Que Viva!" while holding up red, UFW flags  
Celebrating Cesar Chavez's ideas for a better, Mexican-American future

You sure aren't a Mexican  
Yet how you dared to marry me and have my children  
Despite your discriminating family's intentions  
After I first showed up at your shot-gun, dinner table

You sure aren't a Mexican  
Yet you can roll tortillas with the best of them  
Yet your menudo is so delicious, you have to lie  
Telling my overly-satisfied relatives that I made it instead

You sure aren't a Mexican  
But maybe you are, somewhere under your delicate, fair skin

# From Within

By Samiri Hernández Hiraldo

To the otherness that marks the boundaries of the self “within”--Durcilla Cornell

*To Mario who grew up a boy with big breasts. We compared his breasts with ours (el gran chiste) making fun of him constantly. As an adult named María, she shared with neighbors not only milk from her goats, but also blood, especially on the day we sang by her bed to get her ready to see her groom Jesus in the most beautiful wedding ever.*

*Oh María, forgive us pecadores, we pray.*

Creciendo  
 conocí la palabra “semen”  
 pero no la de “ese” líquido  
 que “le” sale por ahí  
 a “las” mujeres  
 algunos días del mes  
 (shh, y haciendo el amor).  
 ¿Será que “las” mujeres  
 también “tienen” la opción  
 de sangre y de leche?

Growing up  
 I learned the word “semen”  
 not the word for “that” liquid  
 that comes out  
 from “that” area of women  
 some days of the month  
 (shh, and when making love).  
 Could it be  
 that women have also the options  
 of blood and milk?

# I am Gloria

## (For Gloria Anzaldúa/ after I am Joaquin)

By Melissa Castillo Planas

I am Gloria  
 split in a world of borders  
 spit out by a gringo society  
 confused by my Mexicanidad  
 told I don't fit  
 In this land  
 or this land

My father  
     a pillar of struggle  
 My mother  
     a stoic survivor  
 and I  
     caught in the fence  
     of cultural survival

How do I sustain a culture they say is not mine?  
 How do I sustain a culture they say is criminal?

split  
     cut  
         pieced back together

spit  
     caught  
         I heal again

this wound is scabbing  
 breaking  
     again with every racist tweet

I cry for a culture I can never fully know  
 I cry for a culture under attack

In the zocalo  
 I dream of another life  
 One unencumbered by borders  
 One without those zebra stripes

Marking me always  
As other

In the zocalo  
I dreamed another life  
The one where you stayed  
I wonder if I exist without borders

I cry into the Rio Grande  
    flowing in my veins  
cut as they might it flows  
    rich & red  
reminding me always that  
    I am here  
    I am her

# Monolingual

By Elena Ramirez-Gorski

I can't stop thinking about cutting off my tongue  
in Spanish class, I can't stop thinking  
about the pair of shiny silver scissors. I try  
to focus but can't shake the image, how  
it would flop like a fish fighting  
for breath how muscular and strong  
it would be like the slabs of carne  
de lengua at Victoria's mercado, they  
could sell it with a little sign  
that says "lengua de pocha:  
can't pronounce it's own  
name but boy is it cheap!"  
But it would stay on the shelf, growing  
frostbitten, unwanted, too small,  
in a puddle of icy blood,  
withered and white.

# Pink Moon

By Genoa Yáñez- Alaniz

That night under our pink moon  
I thought we had reconciled ourselves to God  
I thought we had made peace with the mothers who shamed us  
And the fathers who pressed their genitals between our young thighs  
They led us to believe that you and I were the sinners

When you stood there with a desire for redemption  
cock thick stiff expecting  
I offered myself up to you once more

As you raised the back of my dress  
encircled my narrow waist within the palms of your hands  
and leaned into the spread of my hips

I found myself in the midst of my great-grandmothers  
They cinched the narrowness below my hungry ribs  
each reminding me to protect the value of the flesh

Even as you brought me closer to the rose gold Christ  
that swung hard between my breasts  
reminding me of our sin

and my rebellion against the women  
who soaked my skin in goat's milk and  
lathered my elbows and knees in scented oil

I could still see my grandfather  
nodding his head in approval  
one leg clenched over the other  
my cross to bear  
pressing down hard on his seat

as if to beg my mother  
to loosen my braids  
to lace the pink ribbons gently  
to offer me up  
as a sinner

# Sanctuary

By Irene Vázquez

When the people I love  
 are hurting, I want  
 to give birth in reverse.  
 I know that this sounds bizarre,  
 but I want them inside of me  
 where nothing can hurt unless I let it,  
 a body between them and the world,  
 my fists, my anger, my size 8 footprint,  
 in between them and the Bad Men From Their Past  
 or the dogs that chased their ancestors through the night  
 and into the heavy, heavy, *heavy* of our relentless,  
 unceasing existence.  
 Sanctuary; a place of refuge or safety.  
 second definition: the way you hold me  
 when I know your love will not be enough,  
 Sanctuary is not a soft thing,  
 though on occasion, it is sanctuary, language of origin, latin  
 a holy one, the moment light refracts in water,  
 a flower bursting through the earth,  
 what a shame it is  
 that we have designed a world that requires fleeing.  
 Those in charge of our nation  
 have decreed that a select few may inhabit the land that *they* stole  
 from sea to shining sea,  
 and others, my kinfolk, must never have a soft place to land,  
 must either live in the undertow of secrecy or else  
 make their lives inside half a city block;  
 tonight, Nelson Pinos completes a year in sanctuary,  
 and though the people who house him might be holy  
 the containment that has defined his year is anything but.  
 Sanctuary, synonym — a study in relativity,  
 the way a house of worship, a practice predicated on compassion  
 becomes a prison the second you can't set foot outside,  
 the way a nation founded on freedom  
 remembers that their freedom is only worth something if  
 someone else is captive.  
 Sanctuary, used in a sentence:  
 The safest place I know  
 is inside of a poem,  
 an expression that defies classification,

the only place I trust to not let me be misunderstood,  
on the days when I worry that my poems are useless  
when the heat death of the earth, or at least, revolution  
is upon us,  
I think about the principle of sanctuary  
and pray that for these few moments,  
you might join me  
in this sacred moment,  
this heightened consciousness,  
this pretty peace,  
that you will make your home with me here  
without regard for how soon it will be over,  
if I could,  
I'd transubstantiate these words into something that could feed the 5,000  
or at least a blanket  
or a work visa,  
but who ever said that this life was practical  
so in the meantime, Lord,  
as the song goes, prepare me to be a sanctuary,  
make me a possibility  
the moment the water turns into wine  
the body and the loaf of bread,  
let this poem reveal the power  
in the act of creation itself.  
Give me the strength to make it to morning.  
And then the next after that because  
Sisters, I think something better awaits us than sanctuary.  
Something brighter, something clearer, something that resists name.  
Until we get there I will hold you in this ribcage sanctuary.  
Inside this love that refuses to let go.

Note: Nelson Pinos was marking a year in sanctuary at the time I wrote the poem. He has now been in sanctuary for over two years.

# Se Requiere Una Limpia

**By Amanda Ellis**

Who can shepherd  
them all back to me?  
Find the one who painted  
until dried acrylic rainbows  
caked deep into her nail beds.  
Bring back the one who desired  
she who built bridges of poetry  
and prayer in every utterance.  
Return me to the  
glowing bronze one  
whose instrument was her voice  
and whose baladas enveloped  
smooth like sun-warmed blanket  
fearlessly loud song--thick and slow.  
Bring me back  
to the one who  
fearlessly imagined  
a world beyond all of this.  
Summon them all back to me.  
Shepherd them to this silo  
of myself made now  
of only deeply singular  
radical unbelonging.  
Limp and hopeless  
longing for my former myself.  
Help me call all them back to me  
and summon my own return.

# Símon Ghazal

**By Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor**

A language she'll never learn in classrooms: Spanglish.  
First or second language: both/and borders Spanglish.

Standard English, a blazer-dressed, distant uncle;  
*Tía Castellana*, black laced whore to Spanglish.

*Puro amor* tattooed on a gangster's knuckles.  
¿*What recourse nos queda?* implored in Spanglish.

*El Paso, Las Cruces, La Brea*, indelible  
stains tarring place names in original Spanglish.

Implicated in languages born in exile:  
Yidd-, Chingl-, Hingl-, and Kongl- ish, imported like Spanglish.

When certain consonants appear between vowels,  
they're left out (*mojado/mojao*) of course: Spanglish.

Poets invent *culocracy*, governing *culos*,  
a neologism tour de force in Spanglish.

*Tranquila*, Melisa, conjugating struggle's  
easy. Hang out *o janguear mejor* in Spanglish.

# Spit it on the Wind

By Carmen Tafolla

he says he doesn't mind Mexican maids

*- a probing conversation between the 67-year-old widow and the 70-year-old plumber*

says he doesn't mind Mexican maids  
brags how he found one to take care of  
his ailing widowed Dad  
likes his own open-mindedness when his  
Dad fell in love, married her  
*Even though my two brothers threw a fit  
I told'em, Well, do YOU want  
to take care of Dad?  
Unfortunate she got cancer later; I had to call her two  
daughters to come take her back to Mexico  
Made other arrangements for Dad*

he can't stand cornrows on the Spurs' biggest star  
*Never DID like Kawhi. Ugly Cornrows! Why can't he just act Normal?*  
shows me pictures of his two pink-cheeked sons  
close crewcuts, bushy-big Duck-Dynasty beards  
pride spread across his face, tells me he  
*Used to be a wild child, used to ride,  
till I hit wisdom at 65,*  
though I see wannabe motorcycles still gunning in his eyes

Guess he told me those stories to let me know  
he wouldn't mind someone Mexican taking care of him  
Puts his arm around me, pleased with himself  
My mind flashes corn rows and  
bushy-big beards bossing plantations  
too far back to know the generations;  
jumps to horrified 14-year-old maid,  
madre de mi Abuelita, screaming as El Dueño rapes her;  
drags in slow motion to a 13-year-old maid,  
my other Gramma crying, kicking, dying  
as the youngest brother of the household tears her clothes off;  
jolts to a cornrowed child whipped for being black,  
pink-cheeked beard bush in her face so big it's out of control.  
My mouth, back in the now, breaks open, speaks.

*Mighty white of you, but --*

*No, sir. Not this Mexican.*

I remove the arm, close the door, delete the number,  
spit it on the wind to his two sons  
to gun that engine fast  
and take HIM back  
to where he came from

# The Color of the Grass on the Other Side

By Matthew Tavares

What a feeling it must have been to  
look at the sky and  
wonder what cultivated that golden white light lying  
among the clouds, the clouds,  
a collection of feathers.  
The atoms, gasses, and cells, unnamed, unfamiliar.

To examine love, as much more than  
a chemical reaction or a necessity to procreate.  
To accept the serendipity of circumstance that  
sets in motion the symphony in your soul.  
Logic is not essential for loving.

To understand despair, beyond  
the observations of Freud. Hear the crying woman  
on the street corner and find  
poetry in her plight. Come back to  
the practice of your ancestors, find in the center  
of the hurricane,  
the silent rain.

What joy they must have found, walking  
amongst the redwoods and the river. To see  
the world as a force that gives and takes,  
and expect nothing else.  
To recognize our lives as  
insignificant as the word *livestock* and to find  
freedom in this.  
To know god's name and  
remember it.

# The Ghosts of Juárez

By Cecilia Rodríguez Milanés

*“But we miss her, miss her the way you’d miss an arm or a leg or the light.”*  
*- Olga Esparza Rodríguez, whose 18-year-old daughter Monica disappeared in March 2009*

Because they are Mexican, we don’t care.  
Because they are young women, they don’t care.

The ghosts of Juárez, the mothers, their daughters, the sisters,  
las primas, cuñadas, ahijadas,  
the ghosts shed uncontrollable tears,  
sigh interminably, plead incessantly.

The ghosts, living and dead, throb like the heat in the dust-painted air.  
They hug the remnants of their girls, their women  
photographs, banners made with care and color remind all of their loss, our loss  
unspeakable parts, unimaginable grief, no way to know

# Undocumented Pantoum

By Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor

*~ICE has begun raids to round up undocumented immigrants, CNN July 15, 2019*

Black birds with red wings. Who saw  
them fluttered amidst fading stars,  
past concertina wire? Their caw  
awakened inmates behind prison bars

who fluttered, stirred like fading stars  
who'd once sped to work, fed families then  
awakened as tenants behind prison bars.  
Their spouses cry with children or alone,

gone to work to feed families  
in Atlanta, Miami, Denver, Chicago.  
As mothers cry alone or plead  
for hope, find a lawyer, forego--

in Atlanta, Miami, Denver, Chicago--  
anything other than the necessary  
hope to pay a lawyer or forego  
defense and dignity, concede

nothing other than the necessary  
tools to survive this cycle. What  
court would defend their dignity?  
History will describe the gamut

of survivors' tools as a cycle  
of red winged black birds  
flying over history's wide gamut  
of wires that bind us to the absurd.

# Upon finding Puerto Rico at a toy store

By Natalia Pagán Serrano

In Puerto Rico,  
 we suffer from a collective inferiority complex.  
 A symptom of centenary ownership.  
 We meet again, this condition  
 of colonialism and I—  
 a cardboard box  
 brandishing the name given to us.  
*Porto Rico*, rich  
 in—

If I could trace the origin  
 of this maybe it would lie  
 in 1898  
 how we were handed over  
 like a collectible trading card.  
 Lose a war—  
 gain an island. Only dying  
 empires use territories as bargaining chips.

in 1952  
 with the invention of a novel  
 political status: “ELA”  
 “Estado” “Libre” “Asociado”  
 “Free” “Associated” “State”  
 a political oxymoron  
 a new entry in this game’s lexicon for  
 “colony”.

in September 2017  
 when an entire island  
 disappeared of satellites  
 an unlit candle from the universe.  
 Even bound  
 gagged  
 in darkness we are forced to partake  
 in this game. Forgive me if I wasn’t grateful  
 for your paper towels.

Or now

as I feel more adequate  
writing this poem in our owner's language  
instead of my own  
although—that too—was another's  
parting gift.  
I wish my tongue would burn  
remind me that there's an impostor  
in my mouth.

# **Creative Writing**

# Lita's Lingerie

By Andrea Cueva

"I want to get out of this embassy," Lita stated, the matter-of-fact tone of her declaration alerting me to the predicament that she alone was in. She was digging through the recesses of her closet for the hundredth time, an activity we commonly undertook on my lunchtime visits.

"Which embassy?" I asked. I needed to know where, according to her, we were.

"The Cuban embassy, of course!" Her jaw flexed.

"In Cuba?"

She spun on her heel – a move that consistently made my blood pressure spike – any fast move from her 92-year-old frame left me breathless from worry. *Don't fall, don't fall.*

"No, *preciosa*," spat with venom, "we wouldn't need the Cuban embassy if we were in Cuba! Here, in Madrid."

*Right, I knew that.* I looked to her small balcony, my eyes landing on the cloudless sunny San Diego sky outside. *Madrid, okay.*

"Lita," I paused, making sure her head tilted slightly as she rummaged, a cue that informed me she heard me and was electing to listen, "We aren't in Madrid right now—" for of course, five years prior, we had been, "we are in San Diego today."

"Yes, yes, but the embassy."

"What about the embassy?"

"Tell them to stop sending me mail."

With her back turned to me, I let myself rub my temples. I gathered my threads of sanity and asked, "What are they sending you?"

She turned to me, this time with her standard arthritic and cautionary speed, and extended her hand to me, a limp plastic grocery bag dangling from her gnarled fingers. "Give this away." I take the bag, all too eager to help her remove, remove, remove anything she'll let me take from this tiny, dusty one-bedroom apartment. My fake nails struggle with the knot of the bag, triple tied with her unnatural old lady strength. I give up and take the sharpened stiletto tip of my acrylic nail and pierce the bag, ripping a small hole to peer inside.

*Lingerie.*

-----

I carefully plucked and pulled at each tucked envelope flap, dutifully reading off each and every card to her. If I was going to go through every single card she'd received since 1964, I damn well wasn't going to get a paper cut doing it.

"What is this one?" She held up the yellowed paper, the small blue submission slip stapled to the front.

"That's Gabe's creative writing piece that got published in the local paper when he was in middle school. Isn't it cute? He's a decent poet." I found some tax papers stuffed between the folds of a card and quietly slipped them into my purse while she was reading.

She read it and bobbed her head as she did so, nodding, "Everyone in this family is a good writer. And a good speaker. I think we all have a lot to say."

"We are Cuban."

“You’re right, *mija*. It’s in the blood.”

I made eye contact with her and grinned, “We just happen to always be right.”

She chuckled a little and said, “You’re right about that as well.”

“See? Instant prophecy!”

We giggled together, and I pulled a page of thin folded parchment from the bin. I unfurled it, and read quickly, making sure it wasn’t something old and from her first marriage to my biological grandfather. I immediately recognized her late husband’s handwriting, all angles and slants, left over from years of writing in kanji. *Phew, not from Lita. Just Richard.*

**My Maria,**

Let me learn your body better than I’ve ever known my own.

*Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.* I hastily refolded the paper, not reading another word, and handed it to Lita, “I think this one is a private letter to you from Richard.”

Confusion crossed her face, and she opened it and read that first line aloud before saying, “Oh, yes, this is private.” She set it aside.

We didn’t make it through three more Mother’s Day cards before she picked it up again and said, “What’s this?”

“That’s a private letter to you from Richard.”  
“Hmm?”

*Shit.* She didn’t hear me at all. “Lita, it’s priva—”

“Let me dive into your cave, I want to spend my life spelunking.”

Her thick accent had warped spelunking into spee-loonk-ing, and I could hear it ringing in my head. Our last name meant cave in Spanish. *It’s cave diving erotica.*

She continued to read under her breath. I tried to block it out and returned to the cards.

Medical paperwork? Purse.

“I will worship your skin.”

Mother’s Day card with no message? Recycling.

“As though your body—”

Dad’s letter to her from the 70’s when he found out his dad had cheated? Purse.

“— were a temple built for me.”

There are some days you just need a damn cocktail.

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**Tracking love, a montage:**

June 26, 2013: Richard, the second (and arguably only) love of her life, dies unexpectedly. Bad luck, really. He was 15 years her junior. This wasn’t in her plan.

May 2014: Scribbles on a calendar as we flip it to June,

**The day Richard left me.**

September 2015: Lita refuses to live in a *viejita* home, anymore. She moves to her property in Brea.

October: Falls

November: Falls

December: Falls twice

January: Falls

February: Falls

“Dad, are you sure Lita should be living by herself?”

“She’s insisting, sweetie.”

“Well yeah, but—”

March: Falls

April: Falls

May: Falls

June: Falls

July: Falls

August: Falls in her garage – thank God the garage door was open. Hours later, a neighbor sees her. She wasn’t strong enough to get up on her own.

September: Defeated and deflated, she moves back to San Diego, to another, nicer *viejita* home.

Mind you, she’s still driving.

She crashes the car three times. Stops at a green light on a highway overpass, pulls a map out, and proceeds to read it. We personally witness this more than once. Who knows about the rest?

We take the car away. It goes better than we expected.

Caged to her *viejita* space, with no husband to usher her to and fro, shit begins to hit the fan.

“Where is Richard?”

“He passed away, Lita.”

“Oh, that’s sad.”

“I know, and I know how much you two loved each other. You’ll see him again.”

A pat on my leg, as though I were the one needing comforting, “You’re right, *mija*.”

Time passes in wobbles. She’s fine, she’s angry, she’s depressed, she’s yelling at the sky for Richard to come get her. She’s scaring the caregivers.

“Why am I still here?”

“I don’t know, Lita. You’ll have to ask God when you see him.”

“You don’t question God, *mija*.”

She talks of moving to an assisted suicide state. My Aunt, my Uncle, and my Dad are torn up about it, but try to understand.

I, instead, talk to Lita. “You’re not going to move to an assisted suicide state. You’re too catholic.”

Her eyes narrow at me. *Busted*. She doesn’t mention it again and doesn’t move away.

“Where’s Richard?” Conversations with her, sometimes a few times a day, begin to sound like a jangling melody of *Where’s Richard?*

Where has Richard gone? When is Richard getting back? Is Richard running an errand? Have you seen Richard in a while? I can’t seem to find Richard. I can’t remember Richard’s phone number; can you call him for me? I can’t find him. Where’s Richard?

It’s funny, how as a granddaughter, full of life and love, I become the repeated harbinger of death.

He’s not here, Lita. He passed away. Lita, he’s not coming back, he died. No, Lita, he passed away. He’s not out at the store, he’s in heaven. I haven’t seen Richard, but do you see him in your dreams sometimes? You do? Good. I know, Lita. It’s okay, he’s okay now. He’s in heaven with God. We turned Richard’s phone off, Lita. He passed away. You have his old phone now with a new San Diego number. He died, Lita.

Time moves quickly for all of us, and her memory blurs.

She can’t remember when she was married to Lito and when she was married to Richard. She insists she and Richard weren’t married long. We remind her they had 26 beautiful years together. She insists, “No, no more than five.”

She starts to say to my Dad, "I know you're Bobby. But I don't know who you are to me."

Somehow, miraculously, she still remembers me. I keep her distracted from her suffering as much as I can, but every time I walk into her apartment she has a cat on her lap and is staring, silently, at the perfect likeness of Richard that she expertly sculpted into a life-size bust all those years ago. She has art on her walls from as many countries as I have years of life, but the only thing she wants to see is his face.

*I really hope heaven is real.*

# Patatas Y Pies

By Leeanna Torres

*In the Spanish language, human beings have “pies” (pronounced pee-AYS), while animals have “patatas”.*

\*

I’m embarrassed to show my feet. My pudgy little empanada-looking *pata* feet. Looking around at the other women, I see most of the *mujeres* have lovely-painted toe nails, long and slender and graceful feet. I am wearing sox. Even at home I hardly ever wear sandals.

Currently attending *Esalen Institute’s* “Writer’s Camp”, I’m here not because of privilege or money or prestige, but simply for the blessing I’ve been given in the form of a “fellowship” slot. The program, founded by the nationally-well-known authors Cheryl Strayed and Pam Houston, began an inaugural “fellowship program” granting free-tuition-entry to the prestigious Writer’s Camp in Big Sur California. The fellowship specifically targets “writers of color and/or members of the LGBTQIA+ community to amplify all voices that need to be heard...” in an effort to diversify upcoming & emerging writers.

Guess I fit the Chicana card. But who cares I’ll take it.

While grateful that I’m among one-of-the seven fellowship recipients in attendance, I’m uneasy in this California-institute, hippy & foreign to me, this rural-New-Mexican daughter. Kale & quinoa is served at dinner, not tortillas and beans, but even more foreign is the fact that they ask you to take off your shoes upon entering each seminar building/room. The spaces are more formally referred to as “houses” or “yurts”, and while not forced, they *encourage* us to remove our shoes. It must be something sacred.

While I understand that removing your shoes is a form of respect in many cultures and traditions, I’m a ranch-raised-Chicana from rural-New Mexico, a girl who learned to take off her shoes/boots only after the long work-day was done. Both Mama & Papa taught us that you don’t take off your shoes unless you’re going to bed or on your way to take a shower. It’s just how I was raised, how I was taught.

Here’s the thing, Mama would be making *caras* were she here at this camp, being asked to “take off her shoes”.

I am my mother’s daughter.

We enter the various meeting places during the workshop, most of the participants excited about instruction and being here. And while I am excited as well, I am also unsure and hesitant. At the door women slip off their shoes, sandals, sneakers.

I’m afraid to show my feet. And while I’m willing to take off my shoes, willing to follow the rules, I leave my chubby empanada-shaped feet neatly hidden away inside my *medias*, grey clean sox, SO careful to pack and bring the ones without the holes, careful to find the one or two pair that aren’t worn-out-and-kleenex-thin at the heels.

\*

Seminars of writing fill the days – the passion and the craft – during both morning and night, with nationally-known author’s/writers, with the backdrop of California’s cliff-side coast; it doesn’t get much better than this. Each night for five days I fall asleep to the distant sound of sea waves crashing. Each day for five nights I bath in natural springs in a cliff-side bath-house. A space of prayer. And yet often, if not always, my doubt and ego return.

“I shouldn’t be here,” I keep repeating, whether to myself, or to a few strangers I meet. I have been chosen as a fellowship recipient, and yet the words keep repeating themselves, “I shouldn’t be here”.

I am my mother’s daughter.

Instead, I should be cleaning house and making tortillas. Instead, I should be home raising my 4-year-old and attending daily mass. Instead I should be helping Mama around the house or taking Papa to pick up the tractor in *Adelino*. “I shouldn’t be here,” a voice keeps repeating.

But it must be something sacred.

And the image of my *patas* returns too, my fear & pride alike. I hide in sox, always my mother’s daughter. Even among the crowd of other writers and instructors and new-found friends, I hide in sox.

“You deserve to be here,” said Regina, a fellow-fellowship recipient as well as a fellow-Chicana, “We all deserve to be here...”.

Regina’s last name was also a city in Mexico, and I was both intimidated and impressed with her bold-appearance, sporting a nose-ring, tattoos, and gages in her ears. We talked about the similarities of our Mama’s, and while her origins were those of an old-school-Los-Angeles-Chicano-family, Regina admitted her own mother deemed her the “wild” one, most of her other siblings already long-married and with children. While different in many ways, Regina and I were similar in the strange ways that most Chicana’s are similar; strong-loving mother’s, and family ties as strong and sacred as blood itself.

In a hippy-California institute, among nationally-known author’s and writers, I was one of only two brown-skinned girls, and we learned about the craft of writing, and we continued to learn about what it was like to be the “others” in a group of mostly white-women, poised in their strides, lovely-sandaled feet and smiles brimming with confidence among this coastal existence.

But we were there, women like Regina Juarez and I; we had been invited. We had been asked and welcomed. And while I was embarrassed to show my feet, I began soften to an unexpected openness.

\*

“It’s my calling in life to be a teacher...it’s my great joy,” the author Pam Houston revealed during one of her teaching sessions, the morning still young, the wildness of us sitting in chairs and on the floor, drinking up all she had to offer.

“It’s also very important to me that I help create space, to hold a place, for people to create [writing]” she mentioned, and I shifted in my chair, uncomfortable, somehow thinking she was speaking directly to me, and I resisted such generosity.

Yes, that’s it - I’ve gone through most of my life resisting other people’s generosity. I’ve too often thought of myself as the “other”, not worthy or not fitting (due to gender, or race, or perhaps both?), and I’ve resisted. I’ve resisted kindness, mining it for ill-intention. I’ve resisted opportunity, making excuses one way or another. But this door to California opened, and for one of the first

times in my life, I took it, and walked in, and found something unfamiliar – Community outside of my own state, my own race, my own self-indulgent heart. The experience at Esalen Institute – Writer’s Camp - stirred me to be *open* to the idea of generosity – and the fact that it *does* indeed exist, despite my critical, critical heart. Generosity *does* exist, I just have to be *open* to it.

And it often comes in the most unexpected of places, and from the most un-expected characters. Like Maysam, the man-who-used-to-be-a-woman from up-state New York, wildly open and enthusiastic and often loud, buying me a ginger beer, un-alcoholic, in just the moment I needed it most. Samantha Dunn, whose red hair and loud grin was intimidating but entertaining, and she hugged me so madly & enthusiastically when she found out I was the girl from New Mexico, and we talked about our shared home-state, comparing notes and recalling the deliciousness of red and green chilie. A woman whose name I’ve now forgotten, who was originally from the country of Chile, and her beautiful face and very expensive jewelry adorning her ears and wrists and neck, but she was warm and curious about where I was from, and we talked on the deck with the Pacific at our backs and offered me wine but only once.

\*

Yes here in this place, I’m afraid to show my feet. And while I’m willing to take off my shoes, willing to follow the rules, I leave my chubby empanada-shaped feet neatly hidden away inside my *medias*, grey clean sox, SO careful to pack and bring the ones without the holes, careful to find the one or two pair that aren’t worn-out-and-kleenex-thin at the heels.

I am my mother’s daughter.

I hide in sox, always my mother’s daughter, sound of the ocean, just outside, water within view, and it’s sound, crashing waves, again and again, unfamiliar, eternal, reminding me again and again, in the most demanding way I’ve never heard, and I swallow hard at the thought of my feet, my ugly *patas*, and yet the ocean sounds, eternal and endless, and through it’s voice it repeats – until last I listen - “It’s not about your feet *muchacha*, it’s about *being here...*”

THE END.

# Piñatas

By Carly Pedersen Bedoya

In late April of 2019, I begin tapering off of my antidepressant of three years. The process is slow and involves numerous side effects, not the least of which is profuse sweating, in all situations, athletic or otherwise. My husband and I refer to this time as “the taper”, in my head, *the tapir*, a South American mammal resembling an anteater, ugly, enormous, inscrutable.

I peel off a set of damp scrubs at the end of each workday, will myself into a lukewarm shower, and then sit before the television, where I paper mache a pinata in my bathrobe.

The pinatas are all I can concentrate on, as my brain struggles to restart its own dopamine production. I cannot write a word, articulate a thought, or even plan a meal, but I make six enormous pinatas, in the shape of a soccer ball, a star, a parrot, a unicorn, and one, in the shape of King Boo, a Super Mario villain.

My fingers move with a swiftness, tearing strips of newspaper and smearing them in engrudo paste, the recipe gleaned from dozens of Youtube videos by Mexican women with names like Dona Dianis. I’ve never made pinatas before, but now, deep in my taper, I seem to be calling upon some knowledge buried in my Mexican DNA.

I arrive at work carrying three pinatas, which have been reserved by members of the research lab for their children. We meet in the hospital lobby for pinata-handoffs and patients crowd around, asking questions and admiring the tiny tissue paper details. At the end of the day, I spot one of my pinatas traveling down Eastlake Avenue in the arms of a researcher, paper fringe fluttering in the breeze. I am quietly delighted, though my brain still feels like a hot skillet placed into a kitchen sink.

“Why pinatas?” my friends ask. I shrug. How can I describe all of the pinatas of childhood, the clay pot pinatas in Mexico, full of jicamas and oranges..

The Barney and Power Ranger pinatas of Houston birthday parties, suspended from trees by drunk uncles in chanclas, rope in one hand, beer in the other, as swarms of children shrieked below.

Or the Pikachu pinata that my cousin brought for me--carry on--from Mexico City, that stood sentry in a corner of my bedroom for years. I used to hide teenage love notes in it, slipping the secret missives through the slot in the back of Pikachu’s head.

How can I explain the sense of refuge in my culture. That every time Trump antagonizes us on television, I somehow become *more* Mexican? More obstinate. *More tacos*.

The pinatas are silent tissue-paper protest against a world that is forever poking me in the ribs, demanding that I change my neurochemistry to cope with its petty assaults. They are my connection to practical, resourceful women, like Dona Dianis, who pays her rent with flour-water-news-paper creations and has probably never sent an email asking anyone to “touch base”.

I add Dona Dianis on Instagram, *@decoracionesdianis*. A behind-the-scenes sort of place, where I watch as she transforms piles of newsprint into Angry Birds, Minnie Mouse, and Chase, the police dog from Paw Patrol.

Sometimes, I catch part of a headline in all the paper mache forms, a wisp of presidential orange hair in the newspaper photos. And then, in the next post, it is gone. Covered with perfect papel picado, ready to be filled with candy and suspended in the air, just a happy shape in the sky.

# Erithacus Rubecula

By Nazli Karabiyikoglu

Rural roads spiralled under me; I rode gently, not to scare off the goat herds grazing on nearby greens. One hand on the wheel, the other reaching out from the window, stroking the fresh air. The wind poured backwards in between my fingers. And the green, the amount of green was insane down here. Colour tones unknown to me laid all over the hillsides, in patches. Although the spring had just begun, sun shone scorching my skin over the mountains, as if a mirror was deliberately placed somewhere up there to reflect the rays. The land was packed with yellow daffodils and artichokes.

Who is the one filling their glass with the evening rains?

After every turn deeper into olive groves, my expectation to be greeted by the sea grew bigger. I was pumped, thrusting to rip out from the tight fabric of loneliness. Curtains of dusty vacant summer houses waved as I moved past them.

Who is the one glorifying the extent of madness offered by these prairies?

Those road trips that we take... Without telling a soul, packing up nothing but thoughts and dreams... You know how those trips always end up back at where the person's heart already is? That was the plan; I was supposed to extract my heart from the sea floor, load it up and head back home without anyone noticing my absence.

"There she is!"

I watched the croissant shaped bay below. Day time phosphorescence, secrets of the fish and white linen clothes of Ionians and undocumented history dormant under pebbles were right before me. Olive trees were almost touching where the croissant's tips met. A cabin barely standing where the sand made a small hill...

Who is the one guiding the captains sparkling seashells that the sea brings ashore all winter? Am I the one clothing women whose lips are to be kissed to a bloody death with a buzzing monstrosity? / There are women blessed with lips that deserve to be kissed until they bleed, am I the one laying this pounding brutality over their bare shoulders? (almost literal) Do I have a part in the vigorous kisses of sailors? (what I concur)

I drove down from the slope and walked the rest of the distance to the shore. I rolled up my sleeves and threw my shoes away, then walked in the water. Imagine me finding an undiscovered tomb of a king in the pyramids! Metallic cold of the sea burnt my skin. I managed to take out some tobacco without getting it wet and rolled it. I had just begun to walking up and down along the shore but knee-deep in the sea, a voice from behind asked if I had more. I felt ashamed like what I was doing had some immorality to it.

This old man with his baggy trousers, his cap covering his bald head and his smile missing four teeth interrupted my dreams. He was holding a cage, and a miserable stance under his ever-tanned skin. A moment later the innocence of his worn up shirt soothed me. I gave him the cigarette I was about to light. "Take this one." His bare feet approached without hesitation. Funny how exchanging a couple of words is sometimes enough to like somebody... This is the perfect example of how we excessively give out our innately present emotions. It happens at the exact moment when our minds are at ease and gauges of experience are still, when knowing has zero importance; it

is merely a decision that our hearts make without any contribution from our brains. He took the cigarette and sat where the waves couldn't reach, put the cage next to him. Inside it, three dark red birds. All three had calmly perched on wires. I walked up to the old man and crouched to sit with him. "I shaw the car sho I came down to look," he said. He had a lisp. He took a deep, enthusiastic breath from the cigarette and pointed at the cage with his head: "Thinkin' maybe you'll take these birdiesh with you."

The next thing I know I was seriously looking at the birds. They had, under their brown wings, orangey red and white chests until their necks. Tiny, pointy and dark coloured beaks. I asked him what kind of birds they were. European Robins, Red Breasts.

I wasn't much into birds. Nor I had any sort of friendship with an animal before. The old man had apparently understood that I wasn't a buyer, he scratched his jaw dotted with tiny white beards, and began getting up. His eyes were half closed and his entire face seemed tensed, with wisdom. His bony body stood up right with the attitude of a writer documenting glorious history. He leaned down and lifted the cage with his finger. I panicked, "Wait, wait! How much do you want?" He mumbled his price. He wasn't asking much, but what was I supposed to do with the birds? Let them fly away, right there and then?

I looked for an excuse, "But they aren't signing or anything." His face lit, he laughed. He came up with some stuff about how the birds knew when to sing, how they were baffled from being caged not so long ago.

Who took the treble clef from the night, and gave it to birds?

I gave him the money as I said, "They don't look like they're about sing, but anyway..." A moment later he was gone.

When I was done with wandering, I returned to the city. In the next three days, the birds weren't even moving around like proper birds do, let alone singing. They were about to die. Their food and water were almost untouched most days. On the evening of the fourth day I heard a spindly little tweet. Then another, then two at the same time then all together... For a moment I felt joy, then it died off. This was more of a hymn than a song. The birds were spreading out their wings over their heads, making croissant shapes. I covered the cage with a cloth, they went on.

The next day their melody turned into an ancient elegy that strikes through the air and shoves itself in ears. The cage in one hand, gasping for air, I gushed out of the city corner I was stuck in. I ran down the slope.

Who grabbed and pulled my collar while I ran, took the ground under my feet?

*The introvert city, judas trees closing its doors shut. We approach to the shore, careful not to stumble and fall over the wings of seagulls. You and I, we button the collars of the two continents and shake the fish off the shoulders of sea. Our eyes set on the deep-seated moss on the shore. A cruiser moves past us, people on it take pictures of us. You and I, look and smile at each other. The cruiser makes a turn and leaves bubbles behind; I throw the birds on the waves. I look at you, expecting an approval. You did good, says all, the cruiser, the people on it, and the three birds. I did, truly I did good.*

# The Cities and the Dead - Cold Cigar Smell

By Viviane Vives

We inhabit the cities of the dead and their ideas inhabit us every day.  
— Jorge Majfud

The battery will live, he will die.

You keep leaving in my mind, cancer in your mind. You ask me to drive the car so that the battery won't die. You don't want to give up, shuffling down the hallway, hanging on to the nurse, worrying about your car.

*Vinga, va, 'Vee-ves!*

I love driving it. I lose myself in it. I know where the luxurious Rover will take me: our old house, an exact replica of a movie star's house that you photographed during your trip around the world. Pedralbes, the Beverly Hills of Barcelona.

I turn off the engine. I sit in my metallic-green magic carpet; sheer cost is such an invisibility cloak, no need for a spell. Two children arrive, dropped off by some mother who is not theirs, from playing some type of sport, probably tennis or polo. It's what we do. I pray that when they open the gate, walk up the grey steps, the god of the house, in all its blackness behind the white walls, will not swallow them as it did us.

I want them careless behind the windows with their fleur-de-lis, one after the other, oh-so-hollywood, that you built for your Bambi, our *maman*. Your love went hiding, waits; maybe each scream still bounces off the walls, desperate to get out. Does the wind that began here still swirl around the feet of these new children? Or has some novel, powerful muttering calmed it down?

From the inside, the walls melt, dream by dream. So white she is, so chic, so taut, the house of Bambi and Alberto, where white doves think themselves invincible and gradually lose their light, grow easy to trap. White doves don't die on the tree anymore, but in the basement of the house and the smell climbs up. I do not see any shoulder where death came to cry, but it's because of all the dead that my upside-down mouth slurps life mixed with ashes, because of the day Bambi whispered in my ear that *el avi se ha muerto*.

Muerte. Uno.

Your protector prince decides to leave the ballroom. You are nine, you stay numb and waltz loneliness, wrap yourself in shades of dark blue silk curtains with a Piaf background; the image of the hands of grandfather tattooed on your chest, lit cigarette and all.

Often, the front gate didn't work and would not open for us; that should've told someone something. But now, the gate opens for them, and closes. I do not feel anything, I wasn't expecting that. I look at the wall that remains tall, long, white, still with its crown of ivy, still plunging down the street, alone, as silent as ever. Where it ends at the garage, still waiting, with a stiff neck, for her to arrive, for the garage door to open, the caged girl watches on, whispers:

What hurts is not the absence of them, but the reigning in of your love.

I blast the luxury radio, fill everything, let the music think for me. The car smells like cold cigar. I think of fuchsia curtains, the room where she abandoned you for years. No more cold-cigar

smell. You puffed her away, the whole damn bedroom, the whole damn world—and me. The music screams. In a few weeks, you will die; she will die three years later. That’s not what I expected, but I should have. The little whores stabbed me in the back, took it all, and disappeared.

I wanted to be a socialist . . . but only I remain.

Is war something like this, Uncle Al-bert? All of us there. Then, somehow, all are lost in the struggle—you don’t know how, but when the dust settles, there is nothing, only the music in the car that purrs.

There are dead in every city, Viviane, and if you’re lucky, you leave them behind every time you leave, but where most our dead are, Viviane, is at the bottom of the sea and floating in the air between Barcelona and Veracruz; one million.

There are, Great-Uncle Al-bert, many more. Do not forget that all the dead souls, souls of the living, died a little back then. And we were born from them, half dead, without knowing why or how. A bad history lesson in school, my own sorry tale of the fleur-de-lis house are not enough to explain what remains inside my blood, whispering betrayals to my ear. No one spoke of you, Uncle. I know how much this hurts, so I found you on the internet, together with a pile of Mexican cousins.

Muertos. Dos. (*Two Al——bErts.*)

*Un Millón de Muertos* by Gironella on the library shelf, inside the house. I’m the only one that reads. *Ay Alberto, papá, tú eres mi más muerto.* You left me there singing in the car *que la teva mort* is sadness, but also relief, of the pale ghosts that float over the almond and the olive trees in Tarragona that Uncle Mercadé painted. You played underneath, arms in airplane, loving them, only to forget them, until they came back to you as forest, as I breathed in the spectacle of black pearls in your brain. Wandering Jews—Bambi saw them, talked to them, wrote their words in her notebooks. Some leaving, some converting, condemned to conceal their ideas, their betrayed tribes, treetop to treetop, still whispering incomprehensible beauty that no one, but she and I, records.

They hide behind poetry and chemistry. They sing soft songs, sigh to sigh, while they let the breeze help them sleep. Their constant tears make white flowers bloom in spring, when it’s still cold, as they ride the low clouds of the dry fields of Tarragona. They go to Barcelona, then to Veracruz and always remember how the pines smell when the Mediterrani shines. Blue and fragile souls from so much traveling, their minds broken from waiting for the others; I left for the USA and they whispered:

no!

These were your people (I did not know) pushing me, surrounding me with sea foam tugging at my boat.

You never told me about Uncle Al-bert or the others, only that they called you Alberto—*EN ESPAÑOL, ¡CATALANES CABRONES!*—after him, and that when you told me, a little smile escaped the corner of your mouth. You wanted to be a socialist, didn’t you? The war killed so much more than people. You just became rich. Or tried.

Maybe one day, when Catalunya is free, we will come back.

# **Scholarly Articles**

# **Intersections of Leadership and Marianismo in Cuban Women Educators**

**By Amanda Metcalfe and Victoria Obregón**

## **Abstract**

This phenomenological study examines the intersection of leadership and marianismo in the lives of female Cuban college educators. Decades of political and social separation have divided America and Cuba. Much is known about the communist influences upon education and the laborforce in Cuba, however little is known of how communism has affected the social institutions of gender and leadership. Even less is known about the women who are becoming increasingly prominent and influential within these institutions. For this study, seven women were interviewed in their hometowns of Cienfuegos and Havana, Cuba. It examines gender roles and implicit leadership characteristics of participants through the framework of Implicit Leadership Theory and Social Role Theory. This research tells a story of leadership bound to culture, bringing to light many leadership characteristics, development strategies, and cultural associations with which female Cuban educators identify.

## **Introduction**

The value of understanding these intersections stems from a feminist analysis of the institutional structures in which the abilities of men and women can become equally valued. Traditionally, intersectionality research has been defined as the examination of relationships of marginalizing social dynamics (Collins, 2011). However, more recently Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) have presented a template of collaborative intersectionality. Cho et al. (2013) states aspirations to “understand intersectional arenas not as a rigidly delimited set of subfields, separate from other like-minded approaches, but as part and parcel of them” (p. 792). This model includes examination of intertwined intersectional scenarios of race, gender, sociopolitical structures, and many other social dynamics. The collaborative model is designed so that central contributions can be made to varying social fields. Due to the cultural construct being studied, marianismo is important to capture the leadership experiences of Cuban women.

This analysis is designed to understand how women in higher education are not only impacted by intersections but are also creating their own revolutions as they navigate those intersections. Examining leadership from the perspective of Cuban women is important because of the sudden

shift in leadership required of women in Cuba. There is a gap in Marxist literature, which fails to account for the roles of Cuban women and how they influence gender equality (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1983). Marxists and feminists have to work through both social processes in order to work together. With Marx's eminent attention to class equality, intersecting the important roles of women in Cuban culture, these women have risen to the occasion and have much to contribute on the subject of leadership. It is designed to describe the lived experiences participants have around the phenomena of female leadership and their experience of being a Cuban female educational leader.

### **Significance of Study**

Gendered leadership knowledge can be powerful when attempting to understand macro-level influences on individuals and culture (House et al., 2004). Leadership questions should be developed at a societal level so that cultural understanding of leadership can become clear. Because of its dual cultural contexts of socialist emphasis on gender equality and patriarchal marianismo norms, Cuba presents a constructive opportunity for the understanding of women in leadership and the patriarchal norms that inhibit effectiveness and limit opportunity. Here, seven phenomenological interviews, with seven female educational leaders, provides valuable dissemination of politically rare, unparalleled, and culturally rich feminine leadership knowledge.

This study provided a cultural picture of leadership presented by women leaders who are newly emerging in their society and informs an understanding of the benefits of social structures that promote equality as they relate to the cultural context that can undermine engagement and limit effectiveness.

### **History of Women in Cuba**

The effort to bring equality to women was referred to by Cubans as the "Revolution within the Revolution." (Hinzy, 2007). Cuba was essentially reborn after the revolution of 1959 but remains far from ideal. This crucial turning point took place for many reasons—but among them were the miserable conditions surrounding Cuban women. Illiteracy, unemployment, sexism, racism, and exploitation brought particularly heavy burdens upon women (Hinzy, 2007). Cuban women could find only belittling, low-paying work outside the home. At this time there were no such things as organized daycare for children. Mostly illiterate, women in Cuba remained economically tied to the land they worked, which at that time was mostly controlled by the US (Hinzy, 2007).

The women of this country suffered tremendous oppression, which is a common theme of imperialism. Unemployment was widespread and malnutrition was common in 1959. Unemployment was widespread; malnutrition and hunger were similarly common in 1959. A vast majority of the Cuban population lived in thatched huts, shacks, or single-room slum housing without electricity or running water (Hinzy, 2007). The woman frequently found work only as servants for the elite. Others were forced into prostitution simply to survive and feed their families. There was birth control but not for the working woman—and abortion was illegal. The nonexistent medical care meant that 80 percent of all babies were not born in hospitals; as a result, the majority of them died at an early age (Hinzy, 2007). A smaller percentage of children born in Cuba survived to adulthood.

Revolutionary awareness and a mass upsurge of the Cuban people in 1959 led to a victorious uprising that untied the country from economic exploitation and created a path for social liberation for all workers, men and women alike (Hinzy, 2007). Women had a role in this historic moment. Women not only fought in the revolution, but many also took on leadership roles. Wom-

en leaders such as Haydee Santamaria, Melba Hernandez, Celia Sanchez, Tete Puebla and Vilma Espin were among the heroes who joined Fidel Castro in his Guerilla Movement. When Fidel seized power, the institutions of the capitalist state were thrown out and a new revolutionary government took shape that made drastic changes advancing workers and women in particular. The first undertaking of the new government was to reverse the country's widespread illiteracy. Half of Cubans were illiterate, and an excessive amount of this percentage was women. Women engaged in literacy brigades to address this widespread and oppressive problem. Change began to occur, via government-led programs and through dedicated brigadistas of women dedicated to traveling to Cuba to teaching literacy. Before the revolution, the employment rate for women in Cuba was under 12 percent— today 44 percent of the work force is made up of women. Before the revolution, an estimated 2,000 nurses were women and increased to 80,000 after the revolution. This rise was accompanied by a similar increase in the number of physicians, which rose from roughly 403 before 1953 to 34,600, half of whom were women.

In more recent times, Cuban women comprise about 44 percent of the labor force. This progress is reflected in technical fields such as “technicians, midlevel professionals, and higher degree professionals,” where women “make up 72 percent of all education workers, 67 percent of health workers and 43 percent of all science workers” (Hinzy, 2007). Clearly, women have played an important role in the development of the country.

Pre-revolution laws addressing discrimination and women's equality in society were not enforced. It was not until the victory of the revolution that a socialist-oriented leadership would implement democratic reforms promoting gender equality. With women's equality being recognized, it was time for the next step: in 1960, the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) was formed to bring to light the need for true equality for women (Hinzy, 2007). The FMC helped establish infant day-care centers, which now are government-mandated institutions. It also highlighted paid maternity leave, which as of 2003 is now mandated for all employers—both men and women are allowed a year of paid maternity leave (Hinzy, 2007).

In addition, the FMC has helped develop free medical care, equal wages, and education opportunities for all. The FMC has created access for Cuban woman to enter every area of the workforce in Cuba. Cuba's Family Code, created with the input of the FMC, obligates men to share in house responsibilities such as childrearing and homework. The Penal Code of Cuba is also progressive whereby violent crimes such as sexual assault or rape are severely punished.

(Hinzy, 2007).

Cuba, furthermore, is one of the world's leading countries on the representation of women in national government positions. In the Supreme Court and the Judgeships, women are allocated 47 percent and 49 percent respectively (Hinzy, 2007). Government-led programs aided women in their attempts to ease their burdens. Some of the programs created to combat the hardships of women included six-hour work days, the option to leave work earlier, and fair food rations.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social Role Theory (SRT) elucidates the reasoning and influences within a society that constructs roles to which individuals choose to adhere. Most of the everyday activity involves the acting out of socially defined categories (e.g., mother, manager, and teacher). A person has to fulfill a set of behaviors, norms, expectations, duties and rights. Such roles are flexible and dependent upon social context. Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT) expresses status, value, and adhered behaviors of leadership based on implicit social influences. To control their behaviors and interpret

their surroundings, individuals can use preconceived notions that create a cognitive representation of the world. Members can have some assumptions, and implicit expectations, about the inherent characteristics that a leader can have.

In this study, SRT is used to establish a framework for understanding women's intersecting roles in Cuba. Alice Eagly, a feminist and social psychologist who developed SRT, describes the path of men and women in work, in relationships, and in responses to the environment as one of gender roles we take on, normalize, and systematically behave within (Eagly, Wood, & Deikman, 2000). She also points out that these roles are quite flexible and dependent upon our social environment. SRT explains sex-differentiated tendencies as a result of the social structure and contrasting social positions of men and women (Eagly & Wood, 1999).

The social conditions of a culture influence the roles held by men and women that can extend beyond gender into the realms of labor and leadership. Hyde (2005) conducted a meta-analysis in assessing psychological gender differences. He concluded with a statement of gender similarity, finding that men and women are very similar on most psychological variables. These findings point to influences framed within Social-Role Theory, in that differences occur in response to adaptation to roles rather than inherent psychological characteristics of men and women. They describe a social cost of inflating sex differences, stating that beliefs that men and women are born to behave a certain way can be maladaptive and inhibit or influence men and women's authentic responses to life events. It creates stereotypes of masculinity and femininity in relationships, in the workplace, and in dealing with adversarial events. The feminist influence within SRT allows for a critical analysis of existing social and political structures that affect freedom and status. SRT was chosen here because it provides the best social explanation for the intersection of culture and leadership that woman in Cuba experience.

ILT approaches leadership by attempting to understand implicit beliefs, convictions, and assumptions that distinguish effective leaders from ineffective leaders (House et al., 2004). The importance of leadership within a group or society can also be understood by looking at implicit beliefs. Leadership behaviors require a set of cultural values. House et al. (2004) conducted a global study of leadership using the assumptions of ILT and summarizes the findings using the following propositions:

1. Perceived quality and fitness of leadership is attributed to individuals based on the behavior that is congruent with the implicit beliefs held by the society or community.
2. ILT moderates and guides the exercise of leadership by influencing acceptance and perception of effective leadership as well as the level of status assigned to leaders.

## **Literature Review**

### **Feminist Marxism**

According to the 2014 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap report, Cuban women have advanced to 18<sup>th</sup> among 142 countries on political empowerment. The prior reign of Fidel Castro was overtly committed to the diminishing gender gap. These ideas of equality date back to Marx's communist manifesto. However, Castro's new revolution has raised issues of a gender paradox. Feminists are leading efforts "towards a feminism that is class conscious as well as sex-conscious (Armstrong et.al, 1984, p. 8)." Armstrong and Armstrong(1984) argue that sex divisions should be considered at all levels of analysis and that theoretical efforts should focus on developing an analysis of class that recognizes the fundamental levers of gender based on history,

policy, and culture (P. Armstrong & Armstrong, 1984). In fact, Marx and Engels did not say much about women in their 1848 manifesto. Armstrong et. al, (1984) are describing a Marxist credence, one committed to equality and social justice, that blatantly disregards women in the mission. The Marxist creed, said to be committed to equality and social justice, initially disregards women in the mission. This research approaches the products of these biased Marxist creeds.

It was not until the feminist movement that Marxists began to ask questions about the oppression of women. The feminist writer MacKinnon (1982) points out that socialist countries have solved many social problems, but female subordination remains—women remain subordinate outside of their capacity to work. Gomperts (2013) discusses research that presents a story of patriarchy as an independent oppressive system that has been permitted to thrive under communism and is continuing to evolve further in communist Cuba. Gomperts (2013) argues that equality can only be achieved through feminism and direct attacks on the structure of patriarchy. Butler describes gender as a script that is not passively chosen, where cultural play and unwarranted improvisation are necessary to contest those scripts.

In consideration of leadership, research must address the confinement of roles and compare it to what a revolution might hope to accomplish in making women's labor more available to a regime. Liberation in most circumstances arrives with a certain level of class divergence (MacKinnon, 1982), which remains important in our research because feminist Marxism is emerging in the generation interviewed. Gender divergence was a commonly felt experience among the women interviewed. The outcomes of Marxist revolution are fresh and prevailing for women leaders in Cuba, where a wave of feminist revolution is foreseeable.

### **Constructs of Leadership and Marianismo**

**Leadership.** International leadership and managerial research suggest a substantial amount of diversity seen in leadership worldwide. Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute to the success of an organization (House et al., 2004). The degree of effectiveness varies across cultures. There is a consensus that understanding divergent views about leadership is important, and viewing leadership from cross-cultural lenses can help capture the essence of effective leadership (House et al., 2004). Eagly and Carli (2007) speak specifically to female leadership's ability to present positive forms of dominance, assertiveness, and competitiveness, as well as women's tendency to acknowledge the rights of others. Eagly and Carli (2007) also explore the personality traits associated with leadership. They discuss the *Big Five Personality Traits*, with "openness to experience" and "extroversion" surfacing as top predictors of effective leadership. This research will seek to define some of the traits and dimensions as they apply to female leadership in Cuba.

House, Javidan, Hanges, and Dorfman (2002) have done so in Project GLOBE, a cross-cultural examination using 62 countries. Using the ILT framework, they have identified nine cultural dimensions of societies that impact leadership: humane-, performance-, and future-orientation, assertiveness, gender egalitarianism, in-group and institutional collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance. From these dimensions, a cultural formula of leadership can be developed. House et al. (2004) uses these core GLOBE cultural dimensions as independent variables, first to endorse implicit leadership attributes and secondly to differentiate attributes of societies and organizations to include leadership practices. In our application of ILT, this study of leadership and cultural values will employ the six global leadership behaviors identified by House et al. (2004):

1. Charismatic/Value-Based Leadership,

2. Team-Oriented Leadership,
3. Participative Leadership,
4. Humane-Oriented Leadership,
5. Autonomous Leadership, and
6. Self-Protective Leadership.

### **Systems of Gender**

When discussing gender and the influences within a culture, it is important to understand the system of gender present within a social relational context of society (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Gender is social, the relationship of gender in a society determines the “rules of the game,” and attunes individuals to the certain levels of power that exist in society. This is an assumption of Eagly’s (2000) SRT framework. Beliefs are created and then adopted based on the social relational context of gender (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). *Power distance* and *hegemonic stereotypes* are terms used to dissect systems of gender in society. Hegemonic beliefs are stereotypes created and sustained through socioeconomic sources. They can influence equality, action, or inaction within a society (Butler, 1988). Power distance can be used to understand inequality based on individual beliefs about how power and status should be shared. House et. al. (2004) describe power distance as “the degree to which members agree that in an organization or society power should be shared unequally” (p.517).

Power distance implies a difference in power: hegemonic stereotype defines a belief created and sustained because of political, economic, or military dominance: this includes the media. These schemes deeply affect gendered leadership, how it is viewed, accepted, and the status applied to it. Mackinnon (1982) notes interplay of two important power constructs present in Cuba stating: “Sexuality is to feminism what work is to Marxism: that which is most one’s own, yet most taken away” (p.1.).

### **Women’s Problem of Leadership**

Emma Goldman, early 20<sup>th</sup>-century writer and a renowned lecturer on anarchist philosophy, women’s rights, and social issues, once stated:

Peace or harmony between the sexes and individuals does not necessarily depend on a superficial equalization of human beings; nor does it call for the elimination of individual traits and peculiarities. The problem that confronts us today, and which the nearest future is to solve, is how to be one’s self and yet in oneness with others, to feel deeply with all human beings and still retain one’s own characteristic qualities (Goldman, 2015 p. 1).

McDonald (2001) discusses the importance of this powerful feminist perspective to leadership and influence as they pertain to international law. Feminist perspectives are beginning to prevail in international legal principles of self-determination and secession and are raising questions for government’s advocating the principals of self-determination.

The Cuban revolution of 1959 was the most prominent pivot point for women in Cuba. As previously noted, before the revolution women were expected to lead from the four walls of their homes. There are still remnants of this mentality in Cuba; however, now there is a paradoxical expectation of progressive livelihood for women. In the wake of colonialism—and, later, dictatorship—women were seen as occupying the lowest rank of Cuba’s labor force, leading to inhumane work conditions and prostitution. Women were uneducated servants in their homes, powerfully oppressed and marginalized within Cuban society (Bengelsdorf & Hageman, 1978). Women led a new revolution of empowerment for women. There was a dramatic influx of women who were becoming educated as well as taking on the charge of creating equal and high-quality education for

the next generation of women. Schools were started, educational initiatives begun, and the structures of discrimination torn down, all at rates unmatched by any other country—and by women emerging from an age of exploitation (Bengelsdorf & Hageman, 1978). Although Cuba rests on a political and economic foundation of Marxist ideology (in the sense of working uniformly together for the greater good of the nation, focusing on education and industrial strength), the reality of the situation remains more reflective of the societal gender roles and standards founded in Cuba's history (Masson Cruz, 2015).

Montoya, Hardy-Fanta, & Garcia (2000) present some of the problems of leadership generally in Latina politics, describing the tripartite oppression that Latinas face: racism, sexism, and cultural traditions that encourage passivity. This oppression is seen in the lack of literature on Latina political participation. Varying degrees of power distance is an implicit result of such oppression, and as it persists, distance grows. Not until recently has research been conducted from a perspective that heavily considers gender roles.

As result of Cuba's history, women workers have had fewer chances to develop and display those attitudes and skills, which might lead to their promotion to leadership positions (Gomperts, 2013). Montoya et al. (2000), in an analysis of the "Barrio Ballots," find women to be at the backbone of neighborhood and community political organization and stress the relational, collective, and consciousness-raising roles played by Latinas in politics. Latina leadership exists, but not until recently has it been given much credit, and it warrants more understanding of how a culture's political and social incorporation of female leadership is applied. We are learning more about how women lead, but what is lacking is an understanding of why female status in leadership is not employed in certain societies, Cuba being one example.

### **Methods**

Seven participants were selected for 50-minute semi-structured interviews. Researchers spent thirty days in Cuba to ensure adequate time in the field, establish trustworthy relationships, and develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study. Participants were only interviewed in the cities where they worked—in this case, Cienfuegos and Havana. Peer debriefing between both researchers and interpreter occurred after each interview to ensure the accuracy of the event.

According to these women, interviews were extremely frowned upon by the Cuban government and could be met with various forms of punishment such as being "blacklisted," wherein their pay would be permanently cut, and professional employment opportunities scrutinized. This is a common cultural response in cold-war countries Twombly (1998). We, as researchers, were extremely careful in attending to the privacy, safety, and confidentiality of each participant. Interview sites were selected by the participants for sensitivity to their anonymity. Criterion sampling selected interviewed participants. The measure for this research was to interview five to ten women with the following characteristics: they must self-identify as Cuban and be an educator at the higher-education level. Participants were solicited by word-of-mouth invitation, the only form of solicitation that provides the level of trust necessary for research within the higher-education system of Cuba.

### **Interview Process**

Before the interview began, the participant was read a statement regarding informed consent and was provided an explanation of the purpose of the study in Spanish; the participant was then given a chance to ask questions or express concerns before signing the statement of informed consent. All interviews were conducted in Spanish with one interpreter present to ensure complete understanding on the researcher's part. The researcher also inquired if the participant was comfort-

able with the interview being audio-recorded. During the interview, participants were asked to discuss their educational beliefs, leadership ideals, and familial and cultural structures. The researcher stored all data produced in a password-protected hard drive to which only the two researchers have access. Ethical concerns were addressed through written and verbal agreements that ensured the anonymity of each interview and established an environment of authentic openness to any questions or concerns from participants. A certain amount of time was spent with each participant discussing purpose and significance—often over many hours of drinking coffee and walking the streets of Cuban cities—before enough trust was expressed to proceed with the interview. The women who were ultimately recruited were mostly female educators, while some were friends of educators who had spent time in the higher-education community. A few of them had to retire to the home or even to other professions based on the needs of their families. There was a certain sense of mistrust in the beginning, and many women who were approached declined an interview. The reasons for their decline were usually due to fear of government-initiated repercussions.

### Data Analysis

The findings of this analysis were derived inductively, moving from specific observations toward broader generalizations and inferences Creswell (2014). Observed phenomena arising from women’s cultural values on leadership were primary in establishing inferences about these women’s leadership perspectives. This approach conforms with the goal of this study, which is to provide a phenomenological inquiry intended to articulate the essence of what leadership means and how it intersects with culture and careers in Cuba. Creswell (2014) prescribes a method of data analysis and interpretation that aggregates data into a small number of themes. Each interview document was read with particular attention to the value placed upon education, roles, and leadership.

The analysis progression occurred as follows:

1. Inductive discussion of possible themes before transcription, providing a general sense of information and opportunity to reflect upon immediately after interviews.
2. Formulation of notes from transcribed interviews. Transcriptions were transcribed from Spanish to English before coding.
3. Identification of codes from raw data.
4. Counting frequency of codes using Dedoose.
5. Developing themes from related codes as well as a post-interview discussion between researchers.
6. Creation of analytical categories from themes.
7. Relating categories into a logical chain of evidence that can be aligned, compared, or contrasted with a comprehensive body of examined literature.

### Descriptions of the Voices

Table 1

<i>Interview Participant Description</i>					
ID	1stGenEd	Snglmom	DocDegree	Age Range	Leadership identifiers
1	Y	N	Y	4	Collectivism, familismo

2	N	Y	Y	4	Collectivism, familismo
3	Y	N	Y	3	Collectivism, familismo
4	Y	N	Y	3	Collectivism, familismo, feminista
5	Y	Y	Y	3	Collectivism, familismo, feminista
6	Y	N	N	3	Collectivism, familismo, feminista
7	Y	Y	N	2	Collectivism, familismo, feminista
<p><i>Note.</i> Age ranges represent number times ten, e.g., 4=40's. 1stGenEd refers to the first-generation college educated. Snglmom refers to participants mothering children without a partner.</p>					

Table 1 presents the demographics and descriptors that emerged from the data. Common descriptors included women who were the first-generation college educated, many of whom held doctoral degrees. Certain leadership identifiers emerged for this group of women. Having an allegiance to familismo—which involves identifying with and having loyalty to one's family—was the single most common way women described themselves when asked about leadership. This identifier captures a stated loyalty and dedication to one's own family and the leadership influence that can occur from it. All women considered their commitment to family and motherhood to be most descriptive of their leadership contribution to society.

### Interview Data Discussed

Three categories of discussion emerged from the interviews: domestic/gender roles, socialization and education, and leadership views. They speak to specific cultural experiences of female educators. The research questions explore the cultural implications of marianismo's influence in Cuban society. These interviews examine the Cuban women's experience of a communist-, machismo-, and patriarchy-shaped society—all influences that require intricate, leadership-based solutions.

## Voices from Cuba

### Domestic/Gender Roles

**The gender-role paradox:** Women in Cuba are financially required to provide but are dismissed as professional women. This conflict is consistent with what Twombly (1998) found with Latina professionals, exposing a double standard, or double expectation, of women to provide financially *and* sustain the household. Eagly et al. (2000) discuss socializing into sex roles, focusing on how different sexes assume preferences, skills, characteristics. Twombly (1998) refers to this phenomenon as sex role socialization, which is also aligned with Eagly's SRT (Eagly & Wood, 1999). For our participants, the domestic contribution was largely associated with leadership and self-efficacy. These are strong statements of these women's self-efficacy regarding leadership and career.

**Socialized sexuality:** Sexualizing of women as valuable was one of the first cultural themes discussed by these women. Many discussed the impact of sexuality in their culture. They noted that young girls learn the value of being provocative and tend to have their first sexual encounters quite young. Birth control is available to girls at any age, so sexual consequences are limited. The participants discussed this as a cultural attribute that stems from patriarchal influence, machismo

social influence, and implicit attributes of valuable femininity. Participants expressed concern for the direction of gender equality in Cuba, with these values so apparent in young women.

These women have not only acknowledged the struggle that sexualizing interjects into the expectant roles of young women in Cuba, but they also recognize a necessity for social change, driven only by education.

**Education on gender equality:** Most of these women discussed early influences towards educating one's self as a woman. All but one participant was the first-generation college educated. They likewise discussed the importance of educating their students about gender roles so that equality for women might eventually absorb the class equality peddled by Cuba's government

Shown here is a strategy designed to narrow power distance through social justice education. There is a consciousness of masculine paradoxes and an acknowledgment that social justice must be approached collaboratively with both men and women.

**Women for Marians:** A necessity for family support in fulfilling professional and domestic roles was also expressed by a majority of the participants. Every woman had an average of one child, with full domestic responsibility for her child's care. There was a prominent expression of inspiration and support from other women in their lives, both in the home and in the workplace. Women necessarily support one another within the extended family to fulfill the roles of professional, leader, and educator. The concept of marianismo was the most common impression left by participants when describing their gender roles in Cuban society. One participant described her own thoughts and experiences that speak to the institution of marianismo:

**The matter of assimilation:** These assumed roles often create paradoxes for women to exist within (Twombly, 1998). Educated women are less likely to assimilate and conform to the expectations of Cuban men, because of the expectation of subservience. Our participants discussed how their mothers and grandmothers encouraged them to educate themselves so that assimilation and adherence to the roles prescribed by a patriarchal society would not be so binding.

In the case of many of our participants, education became a top priority in their lives because that is what their families believed best to stride through these sexual divisions. It was almost always the women inspiring other women to pursue education. Still, their views of self remained very committed to the cultural stronghold of domestic role adherence.

Educated Cuban women desire and attempt to maintain domestic roles, hold a consistent relationship, but also become conflicted in their professional roles. They have to be the breadwinner and also come home to the domestic role they were taught to assume through the traditions and customs of Cuba. Gender conformity and thus gender power distance is prevalent in Cuba. This paradox creates a primary obstacle for Cuban women professionals and a marginalization within their labor community.

### **Socialization and Education**

**Family value:** One of the most prominent themes expressed by participants was the high amount of value placed on education by families. Education is inspired through the family. One woman describes this sentiment in her home growing up: "In fact, in our homes it was very common to hear your only responsibility is to study." A common observation was the inspiration they felt from their own teachers, particularly their professors—women who encouraged them to stay the course.

Educational equality does not necessarily mean social equality. Though everyone is educated equally, this does not mean that society completely supports a woman's path to higher education

and career status. Here we discuss socialization and education as a pair because education of women has evolved quickly in Cuba and has been powered by women through the family structure.

The participants were asked questions about their education. A theme that emerged was the unanimous desire to become educated, along with a widespread love of school.

**The paradox in education:** All but one of the participants has professional-level degrees. However, their paths were not easy ones, as there is a societal expectation that family, children, and husband come first, in addition to becoming educated to the highest degree possible. Therein lays a paradox that many of these women experience in their education and their careers: education is open to all Cuban citizens; however, it is still divided by gender. This paradox came up during a conversation with one of the participants, who stated that although she was able to attend a school like her male peers, she did not receive the same education as them. Instead of learning mathematics or sciences, her education was focused on being a “good wife.” This gendered model of education was foundational to the education system in Cuba. The men went throughout grade school learning the fundamentals of becoming doctors, engineers, or science professionals, while their female counterparts learned the fundamentals of being a mother and learning what is best for the family.

**Themes in educational approach:** Themes that emerged from participants regarding their goals and philosophies in higher education included being creative, teaching students to investigate and think for themselves, encouraging shared leadership, and educating about gender roles. As seen in the discussion of gender roles, educating students on gender and equality was a common goal expressed by participants. Another prominent impression was an overwhelming appreciation for creativity. Creativity, highly valued but often impeded by the government, was described as an important inspirational tool within education as well as culture. The nature of this restriction of creativity creates a higher demand for instilling it into the next generation.

### **Views on Leadership**

Three leadership identifiers emerged from the interview data: *feminista*, *familismo*, and *collectivism*. In our discussion of leadership, the term “identifier” will be used rather than “leadership style,” as participants did not discuss styles of leadership, but rather cultural scripts that described what was important to them when asked about leadership.

**Unidentified as leaders.** All but one participant did not see themselves as leaders in their profession. To them, the word “leadership” was viewed very differently, in contradiction to how western cultures view leadership. Many times they would laugh when the investigator used the word “leader.” All but one of the participants viewed leadership as controlling, autocratic, and authoritarian. They did not prefer to identify with this word. An example of this principal came from a journalist who had fought to lead through creative literature and had been met with adversity: “Talking about leadership is hard here in Cuba, and having leadership is hard because the government controls all.”

Northouse (2015) discusses trends of women to limited ranges of culturally appropriate leadership behavior, which rings true for our professional women of Cuba, who are much more concerned with family devotion than any institution or organization they may be a part of. This is not necessarily a limitation, however.

**Familismo.** We see in Cuba what Rivera (2014) refers to as a cultural script of familismo. Familismo is a script that fits with the framework of ILT wherein leadership qualities are attributed to individuals based on the behavior that is congruent with the implicit beliefs held by attributers. Historically, in discussions of Latina leadership, family has often been an inhibiting factor for

women in occupation representation, professional status and advancement, and educational attainment (Mazzula, 2012). However, for Cuban women family is seen as the best way to lead. It in fact appears to contribute to the attainment of educational credentials. Cuba's cultural values and gender roles revere women as leaders in families and in their homes. Family is their life. The multiple identities that these women navigate—mother, wife, teacher, professional—allows for a unique style and status of leadership.

**Collectivism.** Collectivism emphasizes the importance of belonging to a group and committing to the needs of a group (Rivera, 2014). Hegemonic stereotypes surrounding collectivism are observed primarily through the sociopolitical relationships between state and citizens. The media produces these influences but collectivism is also disseminated through institutional and societal practices that encourage and reward collective distribution of resources (House et al., 2002).

Our participants noted strong commitments to relationships and communal collaboration. This leadership identifier describes our participants in their community and collaborative leadership roles. This identifier was observed in their teaching strategies as well. Participants were much more likely to identify themselves as leaders when speaking about community and family. They did not see themselves as leaders in their jobs or as individuals.

**Feminista.** An important leadership style that was discussed by three of the women was feminist—women who lead through promoting equal rights for women. Through a feminist approach, it is seen that these women are expressing concern with and action against power distance and hegemonic stereotypes existing in Cuba. One participant offered her conviction regarding this approach along with collectivism:

I think here in Cuba we need more opportunities for women to become leaders. The women who do make it need to take on the issues that affect all women and to do something. They need to do something for women, for kids and help with all the community. Here in Cuba, the women are asking for things, but a lot of the women don't know the realities of all Cuban women, but it is time to learn. Here the women don't know they have problems; they don't know they are victims of violence. Women don't know.

The words of feminist Emma Goldman—“The problem that confronts us today, and which the nearest future is to solve, is how to be one's self and yet in oneness with others” (p.1)—can now be witnessed through the voices of these women and in the objectives of feminist leadership in Cuba. This leadership behavior is one of collective activism for the community, but the values of gender egalitarianism and non-violence are the values inherent in the voices of our participants. These women have spoken against domestic violence and became dedicated to educating youth about the roles prescribed by Cuban culture. They are hoping that their youth, even the young men, can develop keen awareness about gender and power distance present in Cuba. They commit to leading through teaching.

Though on the surface these women are equally educated and employed, the domestic experience of many Cuban women inhibits equality as a whole. All but two of the participants have experienced domestic violence. An example of this is when women are generationally abused; it was seen as a cultural norm, a fear that they were simply expected to accept. One participant described the origins of her feminista ideals:

The problems of the women are what I sing about; the woman struggles so I can educate the Cuba woman. Violence changed me, my father being machisto and hitting me, then after that my brothers. I became one of the founders of the feminist rap group, *Somos Muchas Mas*, to help bring awareness to domestic violence.

All of the women reported having had a great childhood, despite the presence of domestic violence. For example, four women stated that even though there was domestic violence present in the household, they still found their childhood to be great because they had family. Though feminist was not the most common identifier of women, it was a leadership style discussed by three of the participants in a very passionate way. These women chose careers that allowed them to speak to women in public forums, talks, festivals, and (when allowed) artistic forums.

The leadership articulations that emerged from these participants' were passionate and indicative of a strong commitment to family. Leadership identifiers are largely based on women's sense of self and how that sense of self can contribute to family first and community second. Feminista is an emerging priority in Cuba, and women in their leadership roles are procuring more and more momentum that stands for the human and civil rights of women.

### **Conclusion**

Speaking out against government comes with consequences, and so many of whom our participants view as leaders have often risen to their positions through deception and abuse of power. Compassion and honesty were unanimously revered as important. Furthermore, we found that these educators build strong relationships with their students that extend into lifelong mentorship. They identified strongly with this familismo leadership behavior through their engagement with students. Indeed, many participants described their students as "family." Charismatic/Value-based leadership reflects leadership that uses values of the society to inspire and motivate people. It is a leadership behavior that is seen as implicitly valuable throughout all three leadership identifiers presented (familismo, collectivism, and feminista). We see that participants described leadership as being poor when charismatic/value leadership was absent.

There is another intersection to consider, the one involving Marxism and feminism. Participants discussed Castro's new revolution. The hegemonic stereotypes that evolved from this revolution were voiced. They expressed a gender division that, at least on surface level, is being politically addressed—but societal, progress is slow. Gomperts (2013) describes Marxist feminism wherein focus on the nature of women's work in a society is the best means by which to end women's oppression. The voices of these participants, as well as the efforts of this analysis, attempt to do so. The efforts of these women to create gender consciousness and gender equality through education are quite evident. They do it with a certain finesse, however—a play that does not disregard what their culture deems important for women. They assert the cultural play and improvisation that Butler (1988) describes in her essay about performative acts and gender constitution. It is a different approach, an act of value-based leadership.

Women, historically, in the wake of the revolution, have driven the charge of education in Cuba. Now the focus has shifted, from literacy and equality to charismatic, future-focused education. As educators, these women are committed to educating about the gender paradox, creating a consciousness around class and gender and educating and mentoring their youth. We know Marxist revolution has provided profound change for women in Cuba, but there remains a need for a women's movement supported by Marxist ideology. Feminist efforts are supporting this growing awareness in Cuba. The positions they hold, the charisma and values they bring to their work as educators, are creating momentum that Gomperts (2013) describes as essential for social equality. This is how they prefer to lead.

Essential differences exist between Cuban female leaders and Western white female leaders. Those differences are grounded in culture and when using the lens of ILT, it would make sense that

women enact the leadership characteristics held implicitly valuable by their culture. For Cuba, culture demands collectivism and value-based leadership. Western feminine leadership operates from a more individualistic dimension of culture, maintains an autonomous nature, and emphasizes the values of freedom and privacy. Many white Western women lead competitively and focus on individual gains. Some experts would say that this limits their advancement to equal status in the workplace. No country has experienced communism and Latin machismo culture quite like Cuban women have. They are Marians driving forward with the power to create life. They lead with this power, using it to share their leadership and nurture new values through an immortal esteem for family. There is a new era of leadership emerging globally and it is that of feminine leadership. Radical inclusion accompanies it—where a sense of community and humanity fuel their leadership.

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# **The Changing Politics of Education: Privatization and the Dispossessed Lives Left Behind**

**By Michael Fabricant and Michelle Fine**

**Literary Review by Erika Allen**

## Abstract

This article reviews the book *The Changing Politics of Education: Privatization and the Dispossessed Lives Left Behind* by Michael Fabricant and Michelle Fine. The authors shed light on the social injustices created by neoliberal policies and privatization of the K-12 education system in the United States which perpetuate a pipeline that amplifies poverty, inequality, and the dispossession of students of color. Action steps towards fighting for the collective future are discussed within the political landscape of the post-recession, neoliberal economy.

Keywords: Dispossession, academic capitalism, privatization, neoliberalism

*The Changing Politics of Education: Privatization and the Dispossessed Lives Left Behind*, by Michael Fabricant and Michelle Fine, presents the forces behind privatization of public education and challenges faced by educators, communities of color, and families in poverty to obtain equitable public schooling. Published in 2013, *The Changing Politics of Education* describes a strategic dismantling of the public-school system post-recession that reinforces systemic racial and economic disparities in the new economy. Fabricant and Fine argue that poor neighborhoods of color have historically been sites of underinvestment, fewer experienced educators, higher turnover, with better-funded police forces (p.3), amplifying the pipeline to prison instead of to higher education. Today, wealth, power, and influence have created a public-school system that amplifies poverty, economic inequality, racism through underfunding, restructuring and undervaluing the teaching workforce, charter schooling, high stakes testing and dispossession of students of color.

Chapter one, “The Radial Restructuring of the State and the Dissolution of the American Economy,” highlights the politics of concentrated wealth, growing inequality, and the decline of the

U.S. as a global empire. Within a winner takes all political landscape, wealth is argued to be an indicator of elected officials taking office and making policy decisions impacting education. The transfer of public wealth (i.e., the public-school system, health care, social security program) to private corporations calls for an air of austerity within the U.S. economy. Public entities are forced to produce with constrained resources while policies of disinvestment create a sense of abandonment of the public sector. The capitalization of public services has a negative impact on the poor and middle class while advantaging the wealthy over an extended period.

Within the education system, assets continue to be distributed to the private sector such as charter schools and for-profit colleges and universities. The “new gold rush,” is described as the privatization of education and encompasses charter schools, virtual education, market curricula development, private firms measuring and assessment of teachers, publishers capitalizing on the new standards-based testing curricula, tech companies experimenting and testing curricula interventions, alternative certification programs, and for-profit schools. Eighty percent of operating revenue of for-profit higher education is traced back to federal loan programs. Meanwhile, the private sector continues to struggle with producing academic growth and diploma or degree completion among students of color. Rather, the private sector continues to establish processes that avert students of color or “push” them out of the system. In the same light, local public schools are underfinanced and pedagogically constrained. Fabricant and Fine state \$500 billion of public assets have been redistributed from K-12 schooling in the new economy. Degraded learning environments in the public education setting continue to lead students to early decisions to exit school and take on dead-end jobs. This is problematic for students of color or students in poor rural communities who need public education to build market competitiveness. “Pushing out” or dropping out leads to a more marginalized individual, with little options.

Parents of color or families living in poverty are forced into “school choice” when identifying their public school as problematic and underfunded. The choice requires the family to remove themselves from the collective and look after their interest, entering the charter school system with the hope that their student can compete. Similar to the arguments Brint and Karabel reference in their article “American Education, Meritocratic Ideology, and the Legitimation of Inequality: The Community College and the Problem of American Exceptionalism,” privatization shifts the focus from collective mobility and group solidarity to individual mobility or American “exceptionalism” (1989). Survival of the fittest in the charter school setting is related to parental engagement and student testing performance. Fabricant and Fine note 90-95% of students of color stay in their underfunded failing traditional school. This leaves only 1-5% students of color successfully transitioning to a charter school after meeting admission requirements.

Chapter two, “Restructuring the Teaching Workforce: Attack Rhetoric and Disinvestment as Effective Education Reform in an Era of Economic Decline,” addresses trends that undercut the status, skill, and stability of the public education workforce. Ideological attacks delegitimizing educators and the disinvestment on wages, benefits, working conditions, and tenure have directly impacted student performance, teacher effectiveness, morale and created instability in the workforce K-20. The political assumption is education can overcome impacts of poverty and racism. Fabricant and Fine reference teaching accounting for 15% of student achieving outcomes while socioeconomic factors account for 60%. The disinvestment in teachers and faculty make teaching in rural, poor communities of color difficult as the workforce migrates out of these areas. The long-term impact is students graduate from high school ill-prepared for college or the workforce, widening the racial wealth gap referenced by Darity, in *What We Get Wrong About Closing the*

*Racial Wealth Gap* (2018).

Chapter three, “Charter Schooling and the Deregulation and Capitalization of Public Education Assets,” describes the reorganization of public education based on school vouchers and the charter school system. States undergoing privatization measures introduce vouchers, tax credits and other tax-funded benefits for private education, to promote school choice. Voucher funding comes from public school budgets, and outflow to elite education programs. Vouchers widen the opportunity and economic gap between poor children of color and affluent students since few students of color participate in the charter school system. Another challenge between public education and charter schooling is the degree of autonomy granted on the latter. The same comparison can be made between public higher education and for-profit colleges and universities. Charter schools and for-profit universities continues to promote academic achievement, fiscal management of resources, and dissemination of their innovation to public schools, but oversight of these outcomes have been challenging. Fabricant and Fine note that public school systems are held accountable by boards, whereas charter schools and for-profit colleges are exempt from such accountability. Cottom would argue that the lack of accountability measures in privatization expansion legitimizes the education gospel while devouring vulnerable groups that believe in its message of personal sacrifice in exchange for individual social mobility (2017).

Fabricant and Fine describe the public education landscape of New Orleans post-hurricane Katrina as a “vulture form of capitalism free of state regulation.” Out of 124 public schools, only 20 re-opened as the state began “racial restructuring” of the education system by offering school vouchers at \$750 per child instead of \$5,000 per child in the public-school system. Only 10,000 of 62,227 children registered for public school post-hurricane Katrina. The decivilized forced choice is described as a racist social experiment resulting in short-term private sector capitalization of public assets and a long-term state investment in social reproduction of “isms” where no one is held accountable.

Chapter four, “Dispossession Stories,” describes how the current state of public education has dire impacts on low-income, communities of color. Alienated from the economy, these communities are disposable from public institutions. Disposable communities survive in circuits of dispossession and privilege. Policy directly impacts institutional practices realigning goods for the benefit of the elite, limiting access to students of color or communities living in poverty. Fabricant and Fine utilize critical race theory to explain how inequality gaps, neoliberalism, and injustice define how the way individuals “make do” in their political landscape. Stories of dispossession are the byproduct of socio-economic inequality gaps. The authors state,

What we tolerate for the poor is unthinkable for elites. I learned that it was normative for black and brown bodies to drain out of public institutions without diplomas, with few alarmed about the disposability of substantial majority of students of color. Progressives and conservatives may explain the leakage differently-racism or capitalism vs. poor motivation, inadequate intelligence, and bad mothering-but too many agreed that it is inevitable.

Chapter five, “High Stakes Testing,” includes a critical analysis of test-based accountability and impacts on communities of color and poverty. The term “high stakes” testing is utilized to describe how exams can trigger life-altering decisions such as academic progress, faculty and teacher promotion, diploma and degree completion and school closures. The authors argue that high stakes testing and accountability measures initiate school closings and privatization via charter school openings in poor communities of color. These measures strip power from the communities and replace it under the control of corporations. During this transition, it is challenging for

children in poverty to gain acceptance into the new elite schools. It is argued that school choice contributes towards segregation, achievement gaps, and socio-economic inequities. The authors state that “systemic reliance on high-stakes test scores is associated with a dramatic drop in student of color gaining access to enriched learning environments” (p.108).

Chapter six, “Dispossession and Accumulation: Twinned Dynamics of Political Economy,” describes the dual consequences of the new economy, dispossession of those in poverty, communities of color and immigrants in comparison to the elite accumulation of wealth and resources. Dispossession is defined as the process of being systematically denied resources and opportunities and the closing of pathways once available. Dispossession is the byproduct of financial disinvestment in education for families in poverty. It also includes the hyper-investment of state resources in criminalization of youth in the same communities. Dispossessed communities must survive through public school closings due to underperformance, lack of gifted and talented programs and elite schooling options, and lack of qualified teachers. In the same instance increased spending in law enforcement, surveillance, and security create a hostile learning environment for children in the K-12 setting. The coerced engagement between communities of color and students in poverty with law enforcement create an environment which supports a pathway to prison rather than to higher education and degree completion.

The concept of diploma denial is interwoven with high stakes exit exams in high school, resulting in low-income students “pushing out” of school. Ramifications for high school dropout include a higher probability for physical and mental health conditions, teen pregnancies, unemployment, lack of health insurance, homelessness, and involvement with violence (Ruglis and Fine 2009). These public health risks negatively impact economic and civic engagement and parenting styles. The everyday criminalization of youth in low-income communities is illustrated by students losing parents to incarceration or deportation, foster care placement, and overall destabilization of school and family life. The authors state these non-academic barriers are “felt politically, economically, socially, educationally, and personally”.

In chapter seven, the “Fight for a Collective Future”, Fabricant, and Fine state that a movement with similarities to occupy wall street can assist in shedding light on the social injustices created by neoliberal policies and privatization of education. An understanding between the dismantling of social protections and inequities needs to be a central part of the public discussion. The restructuring of global capital post-recession, combined with cost-saving measures, pressure for increased productivity and the removal of resources protecting educators and students from exploitation should be exposed in a way that is relatable to the masses.

The contested terrain is described as the undeniable need to “fight for the commons,” and establish a social movement focused on the redistribution of economic and social rights. Challenges faced by such a movement include dispossessed populations working multiple jobs, teacher’s unions without many participants, and individuals turning inward instead of focused on a shared social consciousness. Questions that remain unanswered include the extent to which educators and the public-school system are willing to advocate on behalf of the dispossessed. Also, how can parents, communities and a culturally competent curriculum be used to build interest in such a grass-roots effort? Fabricant and Fine suggestions for change include: progressive income tax structure, increased willingness to engage in direct action to extend rights and wages for educators, alliance building among state workers and dispossessed communities, and extending partnerships among parents, universities, public schools, and teachers’ unions.

Underlying assumptions and challenges posed to the suggestions for change are first, the elite

notion that race and class injustice is a social problem far too complicated for the state to remedy. A successful social movement addressing this notion must be committed to equal participation, strategic investment in dispossessed communities, and transformative wealth distribution. These gains must primarily be sought through political work and accumulation of legislative power and influence, a lofty undertaking for the dispossessed and their allies. Meritocracy continues to be a cover for a political system that perpetuates the success of the privileged few at the expense of the dispossessed (Marginson 2016).

Secondly, grassroots efforts often lack the resources and engagement for implementing long-term change and sustainability. Building an active movement would involve extensive coalition work and a combination of financial resources to build a strong policy deeply engaged with communities. Third, civic engagement and community organizing is a learned skill that would need to be introduced to dispossessed communities. Parents will need the support of teachers, university partners, and unions to understand rights, options, and best practices for multi-layered grassroots organizing. Such collaborations need to be cognizant of obstacles preventing parent involvement and prioritize accessibility. Examples include providing language translators, offering child care, granting financial assistance for required travel, leadership development, and meals during meetings. The university component could assist with fund-raising and technical capacity.

Neoliberal education policies that continue to widen the inequality gaps in the United States have implications for professional practice. Such policies are most destructive to vulnerable students. Fabricant and Fine want the state and corporations to be held accountable for establishing a policy agenda that suffocates low-income communities and limits educational attainment in the K-20 setting. The heavily policed “drop out factories” described by Fabricant and Fine force dispossessed communities to learn in environments of humiliation, betrayal, and disrespect. Within this context, students are learning their worth within the context of the larger society. Dispossession equates to disposability.

Within the higher education context, success is based on recruitment, retention, and completion. Research has illustrated achievement gaps and student attrition among African-American and Hispanic populations (Marginson 2016). While higher education professionals continue to celebrate the accomplishments of those who reached completion, one must ask what became of the students who were “pushed out” and systemically denied their diploma? What ways can colleges and universities create pathways for students of color and communities in poverty to rightfully earn a degree at the same rate of completion as their peers? Higher education budget prioritization amid austerity in the new economy continues to allocate resources and fundraising efforts on academic degrees and programs that are resource generating via appropriations and fundraising efforts. Resource generating line items tend to appeal to the masses, and decision makers are allocating resources towards such efforts. The effort and resources needed to shift the paradigm and appropriately serve under-represented students would require a combination of socially conscious leadership and lifting of the economic austerity that placed public education in its predicament from the start. One could argue that such environmental factors are beyond higher education’s sphere of influence. Fabricant and Fine would challenge the argument stating that change is possible through a collaborative socio-economic program model combining the efforts of like-minded individuals, organizations, and communities. A higher education professional would need to find hope in the latter to successfully function in the grave environment described by the authors; the vitality of dispossessed communities and the perception of higher education as a mechanism for social mobility depend on it.

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# **Experimental**

# An Education in Microaggressions and Other Humiliations

By Liliana Diaz

## SCENE I<sup>1</sup>

FADE IN:

INT. UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM – DAY

AMANDA, a white student, CRYSTAL, a Black student, and EMILIA, a Latina student, and ten additional white students sit in a college classroom presenting their research projects. The course is called Gandhi Satyagraha.<sup>2</sup> The PROFESSOR, is a white, fragile looking woman with waist-length silver hair. She wears only turtlenecks. She walks and speaks softly and slowly.

DISSOLVE TO:

AMANDA, a white college freshman, with a tomboyish style, has piercing blue eyes and blonde hair; her hair is always in a ponytail. She is presenting her research.

AMANDA

(stares at Emilia during delivery, emphasizes “our”)

My project is on government support systems such as food stamps, welfare, and Section 8. In my research, I found that 45 percent of welfare recipients are immigrants. These people come to *our* country and get on *our* welfare, draining the resources of *our* government; then breed like rats.<sup>3</sup>

EMILIA

FREEZE FRAME on Emilia, looks shocked, shifts uncomfortably in her seat.

SFX: Silence.

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1      Storytelling and narratives have been traditional forms of self-expressions for Chicanas and women of color. Oral traditions can serve as forms of resistance from institutionalized legitimacy that upholds narrow sets of standards as valid (Flores 690). Storytelling creates opportunities for discourse, representation, and accessibility to a wider range of communities. This screenplay embodies my lived experiences navigating environments that put at tension the “neplanta” (Anzaldúa 548) of racial/ethnic identity with gender, class, and language. Anzaldúa describes “neplanta” as the in-between and “layered spaces of different cultures and social and geographic locations, or events and realities” (176).

Several minutes later CRYSTAL speaks up.

CRYSTAL

What's the racial composition of the majority 55 percent and how long are they on government assistance?<sup>4</sup>

AMANDA

It doesn't matter they're legally here and as U.S. Citizens have every right to those benefits.

CRYSTAL

Immigrants do not qualify for benefits. You have to be a U.S. Citizen or permanent resident to qualify and research shows that white people are on government assistance longer than people of color.

PROFESSOR

Well...class time is up. Great presentations everyone; see you next week.

FADE OUT.  
END SCENE.

## SCENE II

FADE IN.

EXT. CAR DEALER SHIP – DAY

In a small, locally owned, used car dealership lot. EMANUEL, in his early 40s, is a short Latino man with a round belly. He is humbly dressed in his work clothes, having come directly from his job in construction. EMILIA, his daughter is 18, are standing in the car dealership looking at cars. A CAR SALESMAN, in his late 30s, extremely thin and a bit fidgety walks up to them.

EMANUEL

(speaking to his daughter)

Dile que estamos aqui para ver el Kia verde.

<sup>4</sup> In 2017, the percentage breakdown of households on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) was 38.6 percent White, 24.8 percent African American, 11.5 percent Hispanic, 2.9 percent Asian, 1.2 percent Native American, 0.8 percent multiple races, and 14.1 percent race unknown. The citizenship breakdown of SNAP recipients is 91.7 percent U.S. Citizens, 7.1 percent naturalized citizens, 0.9 percent refugee, and 5.3 percent categorized as other noncitizen (U.S. Department of Agriculture). Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) percentage breakdowns by race/ethnicity in 2017 were 37.4 percent Hispanic (of any race), 28.0 percent White, 28.4 percent Black, 1.2 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 2.1 percent Asian, 0.7 percent Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 2.2 multi-racial (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services).

EMILIA  
 (speaking to the car salesman)  
 We are here to see the green Kia.

CAR SALESMAN  
 (speaking directly to Emanuel, ignores Emilia completely)  
 That car is in great condition. It has been well maintained and at only \$8,000 is a great deal! Do you want to test drive it?

EMILIA  
 How many miles does it have?

CAR SALESMAN  
 (looking directly at Emanuel)  
 This car has so many great features. You're going to love it!

EMILIA  
 How many miles does it have? Do you have a Carfax for the car?

CAR SALESMAN  
 (looks directly at Emanuel, continues to ignore Emilia)  
 We can finance if you need it. Very low interest rate if your credit is good.

EMILIA  
 (clearly aggravated)  
 My father doesn't speak English so he doesn't understand what you're saying to him. I am the one buying the car. Please direct yourself to me.

CAR SALESMAN  
 (seems to not hear what Emilia has said, directs himself to Emanuel again)  
 Let's go test-drive this car!

EMILIA  
 No, we're leaving.

CAR SALESMAN  
 (finally looks at Emilia, in shock)  
 Wait, why?

EMILIA  
 I told you to stop speaking directly to my father. I am the one buying the car and you've completely ignored me. So, we're leaving, since you \_\_\_\_\_ obviously have little respect for female customers.<sup>5</sup>

5 Descartes philosophy of the mind/body position men as a superior being whose ways of knowing include reason, science, and philosophy, ideas traditionally associated with the mind. Contrarily, emotions are described as the way women experience their realities and are traditionally associated with the body (Barry 45). In this scene, the car salesman recognizes Emanuel as

CAR SALESMAN

Wait, what? I didn't mean...

EMILIA

(Emilia cuts off the car salesman)

You should have listened the first time. We're leaving.

(directed then to Emanuel)

Vamonos, padre.

EMANUEL

¿Porque? ¿No quieres ver el carro?

EMILIA

No, este viejo sexista me ignora. Yo le dije que no hablas Ingles pero de todos modos se dirijio a ti. Ya, vamonos.<sup>6</sup>

Emilia and Emanuel start to leave and walk off the lot.

CAR SALESMAN

Wait, let me show you the car!

Emilia and Emanuel ignore the car salesman and leave the lot.

FADE OUT.

END SCENE.

### SCENE III

FADE IN.

EXT. — TOYOTA SALES LOT — AFTERNOON

EMILIA and EMANUEL are looking at vehicles at a more upscale car dealership. EMANUEL again is in his dirty work clothes; he's just come straight from work after picking up EMILIA. GARY, a car salesman walks up to them. GARY, is wearing khakis, an ironed white button up shirt with a red tie and is clean-shaven.

CAR SALESMAN

(shaking Emanuel and Emilia's hand)

Hi, my name is Gary. So you're interested in purchasing a car? We can

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the mind and hence decision maker even though he does not speak English. Emilia serves as a mouthpiece or body that serves to communicate Emanuel's decisions.

6 The decision to not translate Spanish into English is a way to reclaim and assert the multiple languages and identities Chicana women represent. Gloria Anzaldúa, in her book, *Borderlands/La Frontera* describes this as the mestizaje of the Chicana language, which serves to honor the Chicana experience as layered, multiple, and unique to each person.

definitely show you some vehicles. What's your price range and type of car you're interested in buying?

EMILIA

We are looking for a smaller SUV with less than 50,000 miles and less than \$10,000.

CAR SALESMAN

(upon hearing Emilia's description, laughs in her face)  
That's a Christmas wish list that's never gonna happen. You need excellent credit for that to happen. I recommend a different dealership.

EMILIA

(looks sadly at Emanuel, he doesn't understand what just happened)  
Este viejo dise que nos vayamos, que aqui no vamos a encontrar lo que buscamos.

EMANUEL

(talking to Emilia)  
¿Por que no? Tengo excelente credito.

EMILIA

No nos quieren aqui. Vamonos.

A manager walks up enthusiastically to Emilia, Emanuel, and Gary.

MANAGER, dressed in a white button up shirt, tie, dress shoes, and slacks with a nametag that says manager.

MANAGER

How's it going? Did you find your car here at Toyota?

EMILIA

No, your salesman doesn't think we'd qualify for financing because he assumes my father has bad credit based on how he's dressed and maybe because we're Latino. I don't know which one but he's been pretty rude.

GARY

(in disbelief and clearly a little pale)  
I just told them that what they're looking for might be hard to find..

MANAGER

Here, let me help you. Let's run your credit report and see if we can get you into a Toyota.

After several minutes at a computer...

MANAGER

Your father's credit is excellent! He'd qualify for any of our vehicles. What car were you interested in?

EMILIA  
 (to the manager)  
 Thank you for your help but we're leaving.

(to her father)  
 Vamonos apa, que aqui perdieron nuestro negocio.<sup>7</sup>

MANAGER  
 Wait, we can show you any car in the lot. You could drive out with a  
 Toyota today.

EMILIA  
 No, thank you.

Emilia and Emanuel walk out. Emilia overhears the manager chastising  
 Gary.

MANAGER  
 Do not ever do that again. You screwed up big time. You don't assume  
 what people can and cannot qualify for until you run their credit. I  
 should fire you right now.

FADE OUT.  
 END SCENE.

#### SCENE IV

FADE IN.

INT. — COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ADMISSIONS DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

EMILIA is in ALBERT'S office discussing her participation in the col-  
 lege's Diversity Team. ALBERT is in his early 60s and has been direc-  
 tor of this department for the last decade.

EMILIA  
 You wanted to speak with me?

ALBERT  
 Yeah, your name came up for chair of the college's Diversity Team.

EMILIA

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<sup>7</sup> In Scene II, Emilia's experience is intersectional of gender and national origin. In Scene III, race and class intersect to demonstrate the insidiousness of racism. Critical Race Theory (CRT) argues that the experiences of people of color cannot be reduced to one identity. CRT contends that racism is endemic to the United States and the intersections of race, class, gender, and national origin can describe the experiences of people of color (Delgado and Stefancic 10). People of color experience multiple forms of oppression based on their group membership and intersecting identities.

Oh! Really? I had not even heard of the Diversity Team. Is it new?

ALBERT

Yes, it's being organized across the entire college with members from instruction, academic affairs, and a variety of other departments and offices. It'd be a great opportunity for you.

EMILIA

I am flattered but I am going to have to pass on this opportunity. I am swamped with work and school partnerships I've developed, plus our summer melt program. I would not be able to contribute effectively to the team.

ALBERT

Okay, I'll let Debbie know. She nominated you.

A week passes...Emilia is asked into Albert's office again.

EMILIA

Hi Albert, you wanted to see me?

ALBERT

Yeah, about the Diversity Team, have you given it further thought?

EMILIA

No, I thought we had closed the discussion. I just can't right now with all of my work.

ALBERT

There's a big push for you to participate in some form. Debbie would like you to tri-chair with her and Megan.

EMILIA

Tri-chair? I think Debbie and Megan are very capable. I don't know what I could contribute.

ALBERT

You can contribute a lot. Your perspectives and your experience working with students of color and DACA students makes you very qualified for the Diversity Team.

EMILIA

I really can't. I'm swamped with work. I can't add something else right now.

ALBERT

I don't think it's up for consideration. I'm getting a lot of push for you to participate. Debbie won't leave me alone about it and keeps bugging me. She's hoping to meet with you today to tell you more.

EMILIA

Oh, I see. Well, I guess I can give it a try..

Emilia walks out of Albert's office. She looks a bit defeated and irritated that she's going to add something else to her already full place. She knows she is being tokenized.<sup>8</sup> Two hours later, Emilia visits Debbie in her office.

SCENE V

INT. OFFICE – DAY

EMILIA walks into Debbie's office.

DEBBIE, is in her mid to late 30s. She's a thin but spunky woman. Her style is very hippy chic and her office is colorful and decorated with many Buddhist, Aztec, and new age decorations.

EMILIA

Hey Debbie, Albert sent me over to talk about my participation in the Diversity Team.

DEBBIE

Hey girl! Yes! I'm so excited you said yes! We really can't have the Diversity Team without you and I need you as one of my tri-chairs. You know so much more about this than me. I'm a white girl and I wouldn't feel comfortable leading the Diversity Team without someone that knows more about diversity. I'm super excited. We've gotten \$5,000 for the Diversity Team and we'll be meeting with the President once a month to keep her apprised of what we're doing. It's going to be great exposure for you and leadership experience.

EMILIA

Right...who else is on the Diversity Team?

Debbie hands Emilia a list of people. Emilia reads the list and notices that almost all the names are people of color with a sprinkling of white sounding names. The college doesn't have many people of color and it seems all of them are part of the Diversity Team. She wonders if they had the option to participate or were "voluntold" to participate like her.

EMILIA

Wow! It seems all the people of color from the college are on here...I mean, there aren't too many of us to begin with.

DEBBIE

---

8 Tokenism is described as the extra work faculty or administrators of color at colleges and universities do that is often not recognized by university/college leadership (Niemann 454). Faculty and administrators of color assume extra responsibilities when white colleagues "other" (Niemann 454) them by assuming these individuals are better suited to address issues of diversity.

That's why it's so great! You're all going to steer us in the right direction. The college is trying to achieve Hispanic-Serving Institution<sup>9</sup> status so we'll need all the help.

EMILIA

Ah...that's news to me. We don't really have any support systems for Latino students to be successful here.<sup>10</sup> Will leadership be attending the Diversity Team meetings?

DEBBIE

Probably not...you know how it is. They're busy but we'll keep them up-to-date on what we're doing.

EMILIA walks out of the meeting even more upset. She's overloaded with work and was told to join the Diversity Team. She can see right through it; there's no power within the Diversity Team and no college leadership that would be able to enact the changes necessary for the college to support diverse students. In her eyes, it's lip service.

FADE OUT.

END SCENE.

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9 Hispanic-Serving Institutions are degree granting, not-for-profit, two-year and four-year institutions enrolling 25 percent full-time equivalent undergraduate Latinx students. Achieving HSI status opens eligibility to grant funding to expand programs, services, and facilities for their students (U.S. Department of Education).

10 Derrick Bell's theory of interest convergence argues that white populations pursue racial justice initiatives when they gain something in return (Bell 1980, 522). The pursuit of HSI status by this particular institution, in Emilia's eyes, was an example of interest convergence. The PWI sought to garner access to additional funds based on achievement of HSI status without first-implementing structures necessary for the success of Latinx students.

The layered identity of Latina women at the intersections of gender, class, and race/ethnicity position Latina women in constant conflict with their environments. As I experienced these interactions, I questioned my own reality. Was I truly experiencing racism, sexism, tokenism or was I too sensitive? Took it too seriously? Saw something that was not really there? The scenes contained within this piece may be useful for Latinas who may feel gaslighted in different spaces. Latinas should not have to question their realities. I offer this written piece to fellow Latinas who may feel alone as they navigate spaces that *other* their identities and attempt to subvert their realities.

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# Centering the Latina/x and Taking Up Space

By Grisel Y. Acosta

**THE FACTS:** The anthology you edited has just been published by a major academic press with international reach and your husband's second book of poetry has just been picked up by one of the largest publishers in the U.S., which also has a large market for translated works. Both of you have worked tirelessly for this result and you are proud. You are, in effect, a centered Latinx couple: educated, happy, well-fed and clothed, with access to somewhat stable shelter, with access to healthcare, with access to friends and family that are supportive (yes, some more than others, but we can't hope for much in this life), even with access to leisure time and cash to donate to causes you believe in or books or concerts or trivialities that are unheard of in your countries of origin.

All of this is true, yet you fear *the event*, because you know how these people have treated you in the past, not looking at you in the face, not asking you questions in conversation, not listening when you get a word in, not understanding your words when you say them, changing the subject when their minds drift after you've spoken. So, you get dressed in a very flattering outfit, remind yourself of your worth, and go anyway, because surely *now*, now that you are *centered*, they will see how you are centered, and act accordingly. You tell yourself this over and over as you adjust the straps on your shoes or choose a different ring or apply a different shade of lipstick. You look at your choices of lipstick colors and think of how your mother used to buy dollar store lipsticks, lotion, soap, underwear, all for your family in Cuba, and how you, a preteen, wanted to use those unused lipsticks desperately, all that make-up just waiting in storage, waiting for the day she'd travel to Cuba, waiting for years and years, and you were certain none of it would ever be used, but then one day she did go and it was all used by the people it was meant for, and you felt so selfish for even thinking that you should have it, selfish for thinking that you were the center, the only center. It is thoughts like these that make it difficult for you to claim the center anywhere, because you are always thinking of the entire group and who hasn't spoken and who needs attention, but you remind yourself that these people, they never allow you the center, so it is okay to take it when you are around them. You are determined to take it, like a woman who delights in ordering the most expensive meal, like a woman who doesn't fear traveling alone and has no need for your company thank you very much, like a woman who doesn't shave her mustache and laughs at the scowl it causes. You will be the center this time, you tell yourself. You are the stage, you are the spotlight, you are the molecules crackling under its heat.

**THE SPACE:** When you take a flight, enter the plane, and you find the cabin seats are dirty, it is an unsettling indication of what might come next. Those of us who are privileged enough to take flights regularly know that fact. When a woman of color enters a restaurant in Manhattan and everyone there, except the staff, is white, it is also an unsettling indication of what might come next. The space itself is stunning in a "oh, we just woke up looking like this" sort of way, with gorgeous fixtures that look worn-in and a cheerful color scheme done in surprising artistic designs, plants everywhere. This is the rooftop summer spot, accessed through a dingy hallway and crowded elevator, which only increase its pseudo-elusive appeal. When you exit the elevator and notice no one in the space is like you, not a woman of color to be found, your heart sinks but you remind yourself

that this is not surprising. The uniformed staff is like you, however. You see them. And you hear the playlist. Not only do all the staff look like you—they speak Spanish, they have Afro-indigenous features, and they have Bronx attitude percolated to suit the palate of whiteness they serve—but the music is all by people of color. Apparently, whiteness is only marketable when it is couched in color. You search the cavernous space to find your party, counting all the Black people you can find. You think you might have seen one or two out of over a hundred people.

**THE EVENT:** One of your hosts gets up to say hello. The other one does not. She sits and doesn't even look in your direction. No one makes an effort to find space for you and your husband to sit. The two of you sit by yourselves off to the side of the main table. It is only now that you realize that centering yourself will be impossible. It would be like explaining to Veruca Salt that it is someone else's turn. How do you explain to someone who has lived in a world *where there are no turns*, where it was always their turn, that it is someone else's turn?

More late-comers join your area and all of you proceed to order over-priced drinks and catch up on who has been doing what. You and your husband share information about your publications, tenure, etc., and no one asks any follow-up questions. When they share information about their work—one works in finance and the other has a sarcastic photographic response to what he considers a hokey photography book that is incredibly popular—you ask specific questions about their current projects and show support for them. You even offer to view an exhibit in a local coffee shop. So much for centering yourself.

Then, the photographer begins to rail against “millennials” and how every conversation offends them, and his ultimate conversation topic, which he claims always puts him on the losing end whenever he brings it up (which seems to be a pattern, apparently), is about Brett Kavanaugh. It is not enough to value a coffee shop exhibit more highly than publishing two books. Your compatriots in this shallow display of camaraderie must also center a conversation so volatile and offensive to everyone—the ultimate way to show that they have no interest in what you are actually doing with your life—that it now feels like a direct attack. This person insists that what is most important about the case, and he reminds you at least 30 times during the conversation that Kavanaugh is a horrible person, is how society created someone like Kavanaugh. He reminds everyone within earshot that there were movies like *Porky's* and *Animal House* out when Kavanaugh was a youngster, so how was he to know that his behavior was wrong?

You now decide to monopolize the conversation, explaining that there has been plenty of material made widely available over the centuries that explains that rape and sexual assault are wrong. You also explain that centering Kavanaugh in the media and in the conversation is a way to draw away from the real issue, which is that a crime was committed against Christine Blasey Ford and that when she spoke out against that, further crimes were committed against her in terms of very real threats. Your husband explains that when men of color are accused of such crimes, no one centers the conversation on the psychology that made it possible for them to commit such a crime. At this point, one of your hosts, a white male, says, “Well, that's obvious, but we still have to understand how this happens....” In other words, *systemic racism is obvious, so why bother talking about it, what is actually valuable for us to talk about is how white men are taught to become rapists because of Hollywood movies*.

You are absolutely sick to death of these people at this point and you finally say, word for word, “What I think is happening here is that white men are centering this conversation around Kavanaugh because they identify with him and they feel the need to explain his behavior because they are worried their own behavior will be judged in a similar fashion. In other words, white men are

trying to find reasons that will make people see his decisions in a more humanistic light because they themselves are guilty of such poor and cruel decision-making.” Then, you get up and go to the bathroom.

At the sink, you realize you are very drunk and wonder why these people chose to meet at a bar at dinnertime, as it doesn’t really allow for any sort of productive interaction. You realize you are angry that your husband’s friend did not ask him at all about his second book and you realize that you were entirely wrong about this event. It was a huge mistake to see these people.

When you return to the table, your husband is listening to the woman in finance talk about a South Asian mentee that she took on for a few years, and how absolutely moving it was to see this young girl get through high school, and how she spent time with her family, etc. You ask her if, once she graduated, she took on another mentee, and she admits that she couldn’t do it again, time-wise, but that now she is on the board of a not-for-profit, so she gives back in that way.

You look at your husband and mention that you are hungry and it is late. You leave and have dinner at a restaurant that was clearly about to close. You hate that you are taking up space when the wait staff just wants to go home. At the restaurant, your husband explains that his friend not only disregarded his book, but he also mentioned to him that he was planning on writing a memoir. In other words, an unwritten memoir by a white man was more important than a Latinx male getting a contract with a major publisher. When you exit the restaurant, where you’ve spent too much money, a man of color approaches both of you for money and you don’t give him any. In the car, you wonder how different you are from the people in the rooftop bar and whether you and your ideas deserve to be centered any more than theirs do. Then, you realize that they likely have never asked themselves that question. You wish this realization would give you some peace, but it does not.

**THE ACTUAL CENTER:** About a week later, you are on a panel at Mil Mundos Books, a Latinx-owned bookstore. Everyone on the panel is female or queer and the discussion is about Latinx identification, education, and activism. The bookstore owner makes cafecitos for everyone, and you purchase many excellent books—Borges, Murakami, some of the authors in the anthology you edited—not only because you are dying to read them, but also to support the bookstore. The event starts with three short films by Latinx folks, some with indigenous imagery and ideas, others with an experimental view of labor production and the border. The discussion itself is guided thoughtfully by one of your colleagues from your university, and everyone makes sure to give each other equal time to speak. There is a comment from the audience at one point, which questions the way in which Latin America is framed. The speaker suggests that we not look at a Western idea of progress as the goal for countries outside of the United States, and we thank the speaker for inserting that important idea. You agree in the sense that each body of people must decide its own goals without looking to the U.S. as the supposed ideal, which is a mythology, but part of you still wonders if you would have been able to be as liberated as you feel if you had grown up in your father’s country of Colombia. Then, you think of your grandmother, fierce matriarch who raised her children and grandchildren strong, kind, and full of life and humor. You know she was never afraid of taking space. When she spoke, she knew her words were valuable, something that you still struggle to feel sometimes. You wonder what allowed her to feel that, despite the sexism of the church, despite the racism of the government, despite the classism of the system. You realize there must be something at the core of her life in Latin America that you still have not centered for yourself, that you must locate within yourself, find the stone of it, polish it, and hold it up to the sun so that its refractions illuminate infinite paths.

**AFTERWARDS WITH AREPAS:** After everyone says multiple good-byes, in true Latinx style, you and your husband discuss the panel at a very inexpensive arepas place. Both of you are happy and feel it went very well and are in love with Mil Mundos. You both feel lucky to have been at the event, to know the people involved with it, to have access to the many organizations helping Latinx folks with border issues, gentrification and neighborhood rights, social justice in education, and women's rights. You mention the contrast between this event and the previous gathering, how they left both of you feeling very differently. You ponder these feelings as your teeth bite sweet plantain and avocado smashed between the corn masa that your people invented centuries ago.

# Ugly Man

By Jimena Bretón

Ugly man, be  
you? Now, I  
have ugly

Ugly man, be you?  
Doing ugly things to  
me  
Making ugly things for  
me Giving me ugly

I thought I  
had everything in control, and I didn't;  
knew it all, and I didn't;  
had it all, and I  
didn't; new love,  
and I didn't;  
had it all figured out, and I didn't;  
was strong, and I wasn't.

Things I have been given when asserting my boundaries:

You are a monster.  
Vieja loca.  
¿Por qué tienes  
miedo? You just want to control  
everything. You must have a  
boyfriend.  
I am just trying to be your friend.

I'm grateful that I didn't and wasn't.  
I wouldn't have realized  
what control really means,  
how much more I could  
know,  
have,  
love,  
learn, and  
how much stronger I am.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### **Grisel Y. Acosta**

Dr. Acosta is an associate professor at the City University of New York-BCC. She is the editor of the recently published Routledge anthology, *Latina Outsiders Remaking Latina Identity*. Select works can also be found in the *American Studies Journal*, *VIDA: Women in Literary Arts*, *The Lauryn Hill Reader*, and the forthcoming sci-fi anthology, *The Latinx Archive*. Dr. Acosta is a Macondo Fellow, a Geraldine Dodge Foundation poet, and a regional representative for the Modern Language Association.

### **Erika Allen**

Allen is a resident of Idaho and is the Director of College Advancement at Lewis-Clark State College where she oversees fundraising efforts and alumni relations. Allen holds a bachelor's degree from University of California, Los Angeles, a master's degree from the University of La Verne, and is a doctorate student at the Idaho State University higher education administration program. Allen also serves as the Vice-Chair for the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs.

### **Jimena Bretón**

Bretón is a Mexican woman, born in Mexico City, raised in Chicago and Mexico City and mother of a young Latino man. She received a Master's degree in Library and Information Science at the University of Denver and is presently a Librarian/Assistant Professor at Colorado State University (CSU), where she serves special populations, such as international, underserved, and underrepresented students. Breton is a 4th year student at CSU in the PhD. Education and Human Resource Studies/Organizational Learning, Performance and Change program.

She seeks to understand systems of oppression, how she perpetrates them, and how she can contribute to their destruction. Feminist thought has been a life-long learning pursuit that has steadily influenced and shaped the way she engages in the workplace, approaches cultural change and leadership, raises her son, and navigates her experiences as a social science Latina scholar and library practitioner.

### **Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor**

Cahnmann-Taylor is a professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia, is the author of *Imperfect Tense* (poems), and three scholarly books in education. Winner of NEA "Big Read" Grants, the Beckman award for "Professors Who Inspire," and a Fulbright for nine-month study of adult Spanish language acquisition in Oaxaca Mexico, she judges the annual eth-

nographic poetry competition for *Anthropology & Humanism*. Her work has appeared in *Georgia Review*, *American Poetry Review*, *Women's Quarterly Review*, *Cream City Review*, *Barrow Street*, and many other literary and scholarly homes. She posts at her blog <http://teachersactup.com>

### **Melissa Castillo Planas**

Dr. Castillo Planas is an Assistant Professor of English at Lehman College. She is editor of the anthology, *¡Manteca!: An Anthology of Afro-Latin@ Poets*, co-editor of *La Verdad: An International Dialogue on Hip Hop Latinidades*, the author of the poetry collection *Coatlicue Eats the Apple*, and co-author of the novel, *Pure Bronx*. Her current book project, forthcoming with Rutgers University Press' new Global Race and Media series, *A Mexican State of Mind: New York City and the New Borderlands of Culture*, examines the creative worlds and cultural productions of Mexican migrants in New York City. To learn more: [www.melissacastilloplanas.com](http://www.melissacastilloplanas.com)

### **Andrea Cueva**

Cueva is a Cuban American woman from San Diego, California. She is currently pursuing her Master's in Creative Writing from Harvard University. Her writings work to break down barriers between the known and the foreign, all with the feminist mindset of providing accessibility and opportunity to all. By trade and education she is a writer, folklorist, and cultural anthropologist. The short story "Lita's Lingerie" is an excerpt from her upcoming memoir of the same title. For more: [andreacuevaauthor.com](http://andreacuevaauthor.com)

### **Liliana Diaz Solodukhin**

Diaz Solodukhin is a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education department at the University of Denver's Morgridge College of Education. Diaz Solodukhin's research explores Latinx identity formation through civic and community engagement practices and their relationship to political activism. Her research seeks to interrupt deficit representations of Latinx civic engagement practices often portrayed within policy and media coverage. Diaz Solodukhin holds a Bachelor of Science in journalism and mass communication and a Bachelor of Arts in film studies from the University of Colorado at Boulder. She is currently a Policy Analyst at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

### **Amanda Ellis**

Ellis is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Houston. She specializes in twentieth and twenty-first century Mexican American literary and cultural criticism, ethnic studies, health humanities, and Chicana feminist theory. She earned her MA and PhD in English from Rice University in Houston, Texas. She also holds an MA in ethnic studies from San Francisco State University in addition to a BS in psychology. An interdisciplinary scholar who understands the value of emerging forms of literary and cultural inquiry, her scholarly essays and

creative work have appeared in *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social* and *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*. Ellis is currently finalizing her manuscript tentatively titled: *Letras y Limpias: Decolonial Medicine and Holistic Healing in Mexican American Literature*.

### **Cynthia Guardado**

Guardado is a Salvadorian-American poet from Inglewood, California. She is a Professor of English and the managing editor of the literary journal *LiveWire* at Fullerton College. Guardado received her Masters of Fine Arts from California State University, Fresno. Her debut poetry collection, *Endeavor* was published in 2017 by World Stage Press. She was the winner of the Concurso Binacional De Poesía Pellicer-Frost 2017 (México). Her poems have also appeared in *ITWOW: In the Words of Women International Anthology*, *Huizache*, *Bozalta Journal*, *The Acentos Review*, and *The Wandering Song: Central American Writing in the United States*. Guardado translated and transcribed interviews with journalist and Cuban exile, Normando Hernandez Gonzalez which were published in *The Madrid Conversations* (New Orleans Press 2013).

### **Samiri Hernández Hiraldo**

Hernández Hiraldo was judged a finalist on the shortlist of the National Poetry Series' 2012 Paz Prize for Poetry competition for her poetry collection, "Entre borrozas guardarayas" (Between Blurry Boundaries). Her poems have appeared in PALARA (Publication of the Afro-Latin/American Research Association), *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social*, *The Griot: The Journal of African American Studies*, *The Acentos Review*, *Azahares*, *Latin American Literary Review* and *Latino Book Review*. Hernández Hiraldo's collection of poetry, *La tela por la ventana*, was published in 2016 in Puerto Rico. Hernández Hiraldo earned a PhD in anthropology from the University of Michigan. She teaches at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

### **Nazli Karabiyikoglu**

Karabiyikoglu is a Turkish author, now full-time resident in Georgia, who recently escaped from the political, cultural, and gender oppression in Turkey. She helped create the #MeToo movement within the Turkish publishing industry, from which she was then excommunicated. With an M.A. in Turkish Language and Literature from Bogazici University, Karabiyikoglu has five published books in Turkish and has recently completed translations of two new books for international publication. Having won six literary awards in her country, she has been actively writing for magazines since 2009.

### **Sara Karim**

Sara is originally from Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, and is currently a psychology student at Southern New Hampshire University. Her poetry has previously appeared in *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Storm Cellar Quarterly* (forthcoming), the *Underground Journal*, *Blue Monday Review*, and *the American Aesthetic*.

### **Amanda Metcalfe**

Metcalfe's paper is a report of original phenomenological research exploring female leadership as it intersects with the culture and history of Cuba. Specifically, the setting of Cuba itself and the women that lead therein were utilized to examine the challenges and revolutions of female leadership in a patriarchal and communist country. This is accomplished through face to face semi-structured interviews of university educators living and working in Cuba. Collected data included interviews, in-country consultation, and field notes.

This paper is significant and highlights the cultural values of a largely overlooked leadership community. This research provides insight into feminine leadership as it reacts to both communism and deep seeded patriarchal social constructs. This manuscript is particularly timely because it uncovers a culture of leadership that is swiftly transforming and ignited within the global landscape. The paper should be of some interest to readers in the areas of leadership, gender, feminism, and Latinx culture.

### **Carly Pedersen**

Pedersen is an emerging Mexican-American writer from Houston Texas, now living in the Pacific Northwest. Pedersen graduated from the University of Washington with a BA in Race, Gender and Ethnicity studies. Pedersen, whose work explores family structure, immigration, poverty, and ideas of belonging, is currently working on a memoir of the shooting of Pedersen's brother in the neighborhood where they grew up.

### **Juan Pérez**

Pérez, a Mexican-American poet of indigenous descent and the current Poet Laureate for Corpus Christi, Texas (2019-2020), is the author of *Another Menudo Sunday* (2007), *O' Dark Heaven: A Response to Suzette Haden Elgin's Definition of Horror* (2009), *WUI: Written Under the Influence of Trinidad Sanchez, Jr.* (2011), *Live From La Pryor: The Poetry of Juan Manuel Perez: A Zavala Country Native Son, Volume 1* (2014), and *Sex, Lies, and Chupacabras* (2015), as well as the co-editor of *The Call Of The Chupacabra* (2018).

### **Natalia Pagán Serrano**

Natalia was born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico. She left her home to pursue an MFA in Poetry at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon. She writes about colonialism, language, the color red, and her strong relationship with her mother. Her work has appeared in *Tongvas*, *Revista Cruce*, *Boricua en la Luna: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Voices*, and is forthcoming in *Santa Ana River Review*.

### **Victoria Obregón**

Victoria Obregón is a proud Xicana and community activist pursuing her PhD in Educational Leadership, Research, and Policy at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. She is currently the College Assistance Migrant Program Coordinator and Assistant Director of Latinx Student Engagement at Colorado State University-Pueblo. Her professional interests include LatinX in education pathways and Hispanic Serving Institutions. ¡Soy porque somos!

### **Elena Ramirez-Gorski**

Ramirez-Gorski is a Chicana writer from Adrian, Michigan. She is currently an undergraduate at the University of Michigan studying Creative Writing and Literature as well as Latina/o Studies. Her work can be found in *Gasher Journal* and *The Acentos Review*. She also has work forthcoming in *Split Lip Magazine* and an anthology titled *These Poems Are Not What They Seem*.

### **Cecilia Rodríguez Milanés**

Rodríguez Milanés was born in New Jersey to Cuban parents. Educated in Miami and New York, she is Professor of English and Writing at the University of Central Florida. Her fiction, nonfiction, and poetry have been published in *Kweli Journal*, *Literary Mama*, *The Bilingual Review/La revista bilingüe*, *Damsel fly*, *Guernica*, *Letras Femeninas*, and *The Norton Anthology of Latino Literature*. Her second short story collection, *Oye What I'm Gonna Tell You*, was released by Ig Publishers in April 2015. *Marielitos, Balseros, and Other Exiles*, was published in 2009 and was followed by *Everyday Chica*, winner of the 2010 Longleaf Press Poetry Prize. *Everyday Chica, Music and More*, a spoken word CD set to Caribbean folk music was released in 2011. She is the recipient of an individual artist grant from United Arts of Central Florida and was the 2009 Theodore Morrison Fiction Fellow at the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference.

### **Carmen Tafolla**

Tafolla, Professor Emerita of Bicultural Bilingual Studies at the University of Texas San Antonio, is the author of more than 30 books, including *This River Here*, *Sonnets & Salsa*, and *The Holy Tortilla and a Pot of Beans*. State Poet Laureate of Texas 2015, First Poet Laureate of the City of San Antonio 2013-2014, & recipient of the Américas Award, five International Latino Book Awards and many other distinctions, she has been recognized by the National Association of Chicana & Chicano Studies for work which "gives voice to the peoples and cultures of this land."

### **Matthew Tavares**

Tavares is a seventh grade English teacher in San Antonio, Texas. He has been published in various journals such as *Voices de la Luna*, *Sagebrush Review*, and *The Thing Itself*. He holds a BA in English Creative Writing from the University of Texas San Antonio. He is currently pursuing an MFA from Our Lady of the Lake University.

### **Leeanna Torres**

Torres is a native daughter of the American Southwest, with deep Indo-Hispanic roots in New Mexico. Through her writing she hopes to speak with and from that sacred sense of place that is inherent in the great Southwest, that intrinsic relationship between people and place - el sagrado - the sacred. Her work has been featured in the *New Mexico Review*, *Blue Mesa Review*, *Tupelo Press Quarterly*, *Eastern Iowa Review* and *the Santa Fe Literary Review*.

### **Irene Vázquez**

Vázquez is an afro-mexicana writer from Houston, Texas. Vázquez is a student at Yale and is pursuing a double major in Ethnicity, Race, & Migration and English. She primarily writes poetry and non-fiction, and in that vein, serves as the co-president of WORD: Performance Poetry at Yale and is an associate

editor for *Broad Recognition*, Yale's premier (and only) undergraduate feminist publication.

Vázquez is interested in the poetics of redress, belonging, and global liberation, generally through the lens of Black Studies, and is part of the 2021 cohort of Mellon Mays-Bouchet Fellows at Yale. Her project seeks to understand how French Caribbean poetics can provide a model thinking beyond sovereignty. Vázquez's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Sargasso: Journal of Caribbean Literature, Language, & Culture*, *F(r)iction*, and *the Garden of Black Joy Anthology* by Black Table Arts.

### **Viviane Vives**

Vives is a filmmaker, actor, photographer, and writer. A Fulbright scholar for Artistic Studies–Tisch School of the Arts, NYU—her translation work, poems, and short stories have been published internationally. Her recent publications are poetry in the Southeast Missouri University Press, a short story, “Todo es de Color,” in *Litro Magazine* of London, and a story in *The Write Launch*: “In the oblique and dreamlike style of Marguerite Duras, Vives weaves memories of her ancestors and place—Nice, Barcelona, Perth, New South Wales, Texas—in “Dialogues With Your Notebook,” a stunning literary achievement.”

Vives also appears in *Burningword Literary Journal*, *Vagabonds: an Anthology of the Mad Ones*, *Five:2:One Magazine*, and others. She was a finalist of the Philadelphia Stories' Sandy Crimmins National Prize in Poetry this year and a semi-finalist of the American Short(er) Fiction Contest. Viviane writes in both, Spanish and English. Her first language was French and part of her family spoke Catalan at home. She learned Portuguese to be able to read Fernando Pessoa in his native language.

### **Jennifer Yáñez-Alaniz**

Yáñez-Alaniz is a post-secondary, adult education teacher and community activist who has worked with immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and survivors of human trafficking. Yáñez-Alaniz's current collaborative project was presented at the UN Commission on the Status of Women at the 2019 New York Conference. Though her current professional writing is in program proposals and development, she has been writing poetry for years. This is her first submission.