THE DECOLONIAL OFFERINGS OF COLLABORATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY WITH THE NAHUI OLLIN

EMILY DAVALOS
NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

VALENTINA JADUE
THE OMAR IBN SAID SCHOOL OF POPULAR EDUCATION,

MICHELLE PÉREZ IBARRA
GUACAMAYA ROJA

DOI: https://doi.org/10.51734/fv30am08

ABSTRACT

Our stories do not speak for everyone, and they were never intended to. However, weaving our stories adds strength and weight to reclaiming the knowledge and ways of being that colonization sought to destroy. We used collaborative autoethnography (CAE) because it strengthens the power of a single story by weaving it with others to cultivate their medicine (Chang, Ngunjiri, and Hernandez 2016). When used with a decolonial framework, CAE can disrupt settler colonial logics and whiteness (Davalos 2021). Additionally, CAE with a decolonial framework challenges hegemonic power structures by disrupting dominant ideologies and power differentials in research as well as by reclaiming our generative knowledge with the land (Davalos 2021).

Recommended Citation

Davalos, E., Jadue, V., Ibarra, M. (2024). The Decolonial Offerings of Collaborative Autoethnography with the Nahui Ollin. Rio Bravo: A Journal of the Borderlands, 25, 39-53

Three women from different colonized lands in Latin America embarked on creating a CAE to explore what our stories as revolutionary community organizers can offer ethnic studies educators who struggle to bring this work into schools. Emily, the Xicana researcher in Arizona, began attending virtual popular education classes offered by a revolutionary organization in Florida during the Uprisings in the summer of 2020. That is where she connected with Valentina, the revolutionary organizer from Chile and Palestine, as she educated people on revolutionary work throughout Latin America. At the same time, Emily was learning from other Latin American revolutionary organizations and met Micaela, the researcher with Afro-Indigenous Colombian roots, who lives in New Jersey. Micaela was facilitating restorative conversations with people in Colombia, New Jersey, London, West Virginia, and Arizona after a rupture happened in two sister organizations. Emily brought the three of us together to create a CAE with a decolonial framework for her dissertation. We knew the lessons we gathered through our experiences as organizers had something to offer, but we did not know what collectively analyzing our stories with the medicine of the *Nahui Ollin* would offer us in reclaiming our power.

We used CAE to disrupt the dominant ideologies of objectivity, neutrality, and individualism (Solórzano and Yosso 2002; Yosso 2006). We also used CAE to disrupt hegemonic power structures with the use of power sharing through collective decision-making and collective data analysis (Chang, Ngunjiri, and Hernandez 2016). We drew from a decolonial framework of the *Nahui Ollin* (a.k.a. the four movements in the Aztec Calendar) to guide our stories by rooting us to the medicine of the earth. The Xicana researcher had been studying the powerful work of the Mexican American Studies (MAS) program in Tucson, Arizona (1998-2010). The MAS program designed their curriculum with the medicine of the *Nahui Ollin*. As the central space of the Mexica/Aztec calendar, *Tonalmachiotl*, the *Nahui Ollin* encompasses the four movements of critical self-reflection, precious and beautiful knowledge, the will to act, and transformation (Acosta 2007; Arce 2016; Arce and Fernández 2009; Villanueva 2013). Importantly, different *danza*[i] groups across Turtle Island have variations in the *Nahui Ollin* in regard to the colors and directions associated with the four movements. The MAS Program worked with the *Calpolli Teoxicalli*, "an Indigenous community of several families who self-identify as *Tlamanalca*-Indigenous peoples of Tucson" (Arce and Fernández 2009). Rodriguez described the *Nahui Ollin* as an ethical map that carries a precolonial understanding of how to "be more equitable, accountable, and aware when engaging others in society" (2019, 29). The creators of the MAS program used the *Nahui Ollin* to guide their curriculum, and we used the *Nahui Ollin* to cultivate the offerings of our stories as revolutionary community organizers committed to the struggle for Black liberation and decolonization.

OUR STORIES

VALENTINA'S

Valentina's story begins with her roots in Chile after her mother's family had been forced to leave Palestine because of the British occupation and then the violent, settler-colonial project of Israel. Chile carries the memories of her childhood and her father's family. The myth of better

opportunities in the American dream led her family to migrate to Florida giving up professions, careers, and the land they were going to build a home on to be forced into low-wage, hourly work. Leaving Chile created a big gap between her connection to her family and to her Palestinian roots. Migrating to the US fostered a sense of not belonging because of being too Americanized to her family in Chile and here in the US not being American because of Chilean and Palestinian roots. Her work as an organizer began with an abolitionist organization, and her work doing court watch exposed her to how injustices in the legal system trap working-class, racialized communities. Her political education began by learning about mass incarceration and expanded to understand the connection between Black and Palestinian struggles. The pandemic amplified her education and organizing by helping with a service site for the unsheltered people of Miami, who have been significantly impacted by COVID and neglected by the County's Homeless Trust. People's tents were being destroyed without access to shelters, no access to PPE, and no food assistance all while COVID and police were attacking and murdering people. Beyond the work in the streets, she also worked with comrades to offer virtual political education classes. Contributing to a CAE project with the *Nahui Ollin* offered her a sense of belonging through reflecting on her roots and story.

MICAELA'S

Micaela's story was written during her unexpected, extended visit to her homeland of Cartagena, Colombia. She is an Afro-Indigenous Colombian woman who exudes an intuitive strength. She begins her story in reflection of how the culmination of the threads of her work have produced the tapestry that roots her to revolution. Her abuela and mama taught her about her mestiza roots. She recognizes that the term has been used to weaponize anti-Blackness because of its relationship to whiteness, but she remembers the validation and empowerment it offered her in embracing the vibrancy of her multifaceted roots. As an Afro-Indigenous Colombian woman born in the United States, she experienced never fully being Black in the North, and always feeling fully Black in the South. Her paternal abuelo began the migration to the United States, and after her father met her mother in Cartagena, he brought her family to their one-bedroom apartment in Union City, New Jersey. While her political education began as a first-generation college student, the murder of Philando Castile brought her to apply the theory she had learned to her work in the streets. The pandemic also amplified her praxis as she jumped into action with other organizers to develop mutual aid for racialized communities. Creating a CAE forced her to not only shift her focus to reclaiming power but also to returning it to where it is due. It's not about passing the mic or speaking for people who are silenced. It's about creating space for others to reclaim their power through throwing off the shackles of colonization in the spirit of Palenque.[ii]

EMILY'S

Emily's story begins with the first record of her paternal roots in the area of El Paso, Texas when it was a part of México. She speaks to the merging of colonizer and colonized spurred by the de-Indigenization of México through the genocidal practices of the Spanish. The insidious hold of the Catholic Church led her family to homestead with 116 other Mexican families under the

regulations issued in 1827 by the Congress of the State of Chihuahua. Her story speaks to the intergenerational trauma passed down through 500 years of colonization. Her father's generation was barred from using their language in school and the first generation to marry white spouses. Emily traces her path towards organizing, which grew from her healing journey to reclaim the knowledge that had been severed through assimilation. Her organizing work began with a struggle to disrupt student housing developers from displacing a mostly undocumented community. Her revolutionary consciousness developed through organizing work with undocumented women who worked in hotels. As BLM began to take shape in 2014, she committed herself to the struggle for Black liberation and decolonization. The pandemic led to the crumbling of plans for a community center, but it also amplified mutual aid work to redistribute stimulus funds and to distribute food to undocumented families. Creating a CAE with the *Nahui Ollin* offered a homecoming that gave her permission to be who she is while also nourishing continual growth through transformation. Because her connection to her roots had been severed through assimilation within a system and structures not designed to include her but to continually remind her to be other than who she is, connecting to the medicine of the *Nahui Ollin* showed her the strength of her ways of knowing and being through cultivating her story in relationship with others.

COLLABORATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Stories carry vital medicine for decolonization because colonized communities have preserved rich storytelling traditions through 500 years of colonization (Delgado 1990; Bernal 1998). Autoethnography challenges dominant ideologies of objectivity and neutrality by centering experience as a vital source of analysis and a foundation for the production of knowledge. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner define autoethnography as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand a cultural experience (ethno)" (2011, para. 1). Autoethnography disrupts the binary between researcher and participant because people share and analyze their own stories rather than someone conducting research *on* them. Chang, Ngunjiri, and Hernandez explained that autoethnographers "use data from their own life stories as situated in sociocultural contexts in order to gain an understanding of society through the unique lens of self" (2016, 18). By situating knowledge production within personal experience to reflect sociocultural phenomena, autoethnography disrupts feigned neutrality that masks the systems and structures of society that shape oppression (Yosso 2006). CAE expands the lens of self because researchers work together to collectively analyze and interpret data in order to understand sociocultural phenomena (Chang et al. 2016). Through weaving our stories and integrating collective analysis, CAE offers "a unique synergy and harmony that autoethnographers cannot attain in isolation" (Chang et al. 2016, 24). The dialogic questioning in CAE along with collective data analysis produces knowledge that fundamentally disrupts objectivity, neutrality, and individualism.

In addition to collective data analysis and interpretation, CAE uses collective decision-making, which disrupts power differentials that are imposed with a distinction between researcher and participant; no single person has complete decision-making power. Collaboration in CAE

ranges from full collaboration in which all co-researchers take part in every aspect of the research process to partial collaboration. In partial collaboration, participation differs during the stages of writing, analysis, and interpretation (Chang et al. 2016). In our partial collaboration, Emily approached the other two after the research questions were determined and the research was approved by the university. In our collaborative autoethnography, we collectively created a shared writing prompt based on the four movements of the *Nahui Ollin*. We exchanged stories and then met to discuss common themes and distinctions. Due to time constraints, only one researcher conducted the coding and data analysis. We came together again for member-checking, to discuss the findings, and to collectively answer the research questions.

THE NAHUI OLLIN

CAE's pairing with a decolonial framework offers a means to disrupt settler colonial logics and whiteness while we reclaim the medicine that colonization has sought to destroy. The *Nahui Ollin* encompasses the four movements of *Tezcatlipoca* (critical self-reflection), *Quetzalcoatl* (precious and beautiful knowledge), *Huitzilopochtli* (the will to act), and *Xipe Totec* (transformation). Acosta maintained that the *Nahui Ollin* "emphasizes self-actualization and action to create a better community, a better world" (2007, 38). As a decolonial framework, the *Nahui Ollin* carries Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Villanueva emphasized that its medicine offers "an embodied experience of living Indigenous knowledge" (2013, 30). Through its use, we had the opportunity to reclaim our power with its medicine. Its medicine reinvigorated and nourished us in our work in service of Black liberation and decolonization.

Importantly, the principles of the *Nahui Ollin* are movements and are not static or unchanging; the movement creates space for decolonial cycles of transformation. The four movements of the *Nahui Ollin* carry "physical, spatial, scientific, and philosophical meanings" (Arce 2016, 31). Each of the four movements build upon each other; precious and beautiful knowledge builds on critical self-reflection, which is sustained through willpower, and the transformation of *Xipe Totec* encompasses each of the other movements. Moreover, this decolonial framework centers the medicine of nature to transform individuals and communities. Arce positioned the *Nahui Ollin* as a "map for strategic action" because it is "an epistemological tool that facilitates processes of resistance, decolonization, and rehumanization for Xicana/o-Mexicana/o people" (2016, 20). We used the medicine of the four movements to teach us what we need to know, how to connect, and how to use the information gained.

TEZCATLIPOCA

Tezcatlipoca corresponds to the element of earth and north, or *Mictlanpa*, and translates as the smoking mirror (Arce 2016; Villanueva 2013). Chicano elder, Tupac Enrique Acosta, described the smoking mirror as "a reflection, a moment of reconciliation of the past with the possibilities of the future—not a vision of light but an awareness of the shadow that is the smoke of light's passing. It is the 'smoking mirror' into which the individual, the family, the clan, the barrio, the tribe, and the nation must gaze into to acquire the sense of history that calls for liberation" (as cited in Arce 2016, 32). The medicine of *Tezcatlipoca* shows us that carrying a sense of history leads us to take

up the 500-year struggle for liberation. Arce (2016) explained that this critical reflection leads to regaining individual and communal historical memory. Regaining this memory takes discipline because, as Villanueva explained, "we must vigorously search within ourselves in silencing the distraction and obstacles in our lives in order to be warriors for our jente and justice" (2013, 32). Critical self-reflection is the initial transformative cycle within the larger transformative cycle of the *Nahui Ollin.*

Arce and Fernández described *Tezcatlipoca* as initiating a healing process when embraced in the process of storytelling. The authors maintain that *Tezcatlipoca* offers a "liberatory process of reconciliation through writing and sharing narratives" (2009, 21). CAE offers the opportunity to engage in a liberatory process of meeting *Tezcatlipoca* through collectively writing and sharing our stories. For this movement*,* our stories responded to the questions: Where is home? How do you think your idea of home has changed over the years? When I look in the mirror, what do I see? In our stories, the themes of home and family corresponded with the energy of *Tezcatlipoca* to illuminate the sacred nature of revolutionary organizing; it carries the intimacy of home and what is at stake in the revolutionary struggle against imperialism's destruction of homes and families. Our stories spoke to the complexities of physically being separated from our home, the trauma of colonization being associated with home, and the embrace of finding home in the revolutionary struggle.

Within the theme of family, our stories spoke to the strength of our multi-faceted roots nourishing us in the struggle as well as to the strength of our roots offering the vantage of *Nepantla*[iii] (between worlds) (Anzaldua 1987; Calderón, et al. 2012) as a tool of resistance we can draw from. The multifaceted nature of Micaela's roots as an Afro-Indigenous Colombian woman led Micaela to describe how Gloria Anzaldua's concept of *Nepantla* captures the experience of *ni de aquí, ni de allá,* existing neither here nor there, but rather the vantage and strength of being in between. Each of us mentioned having roots in multiple cultures and lands. Valentina reflects on her multifaceted roots in Chile and Palestine by recognizing the US will never be home because it actively destroys these roots through its imperialist warmongering. During our second meeting, we spoke more about her experience of being forced to silence and deny her Palestinian roots and told to only claim her Chilean roots. While both Micaela and Valentina highlighted the strength of these multifaceted roots, Emily's story shed light on when those roots are unable to nourish us when we lose connection. This lost connection can result in generational trauma being passed down through poisonous machinations of colonization. In connecting to the strength our roots offer, we reclaim ways of knowing and being that colonization has sought to destroy.

Our ancestral roots nourish our resistance, which commits us to the revolutionary struggle. While our interwoven stories provide a tapestry of offerings, our roots stem from very different places. Latinidad carries the potential to erase our orientation to the land as home. Severing this connection as a means of assimilation also severs us from Indigenous epistemology and ontology rooted in the land. Latinidad functions to mask the imperialism that forces people from the land of their ancestors and the vital knowledge contained therein. One researcher lives within 500 miles of the first written record of her paternal family while the other two are separated from their

homeland by oceans because of US imperialism. Under the label of Latina, the vitality of these roots is disregarded. Latinidad severs us from the roots of our ancestors when it racializes us to be the same. Culture, language, and land are places of strength that we draw from and carry with us. The medicine of critical self-reflection roots us to the land, our home, and Indigenous ways of knowing and being; severing that connection furthers the mission of US imperialism that claims we are all the same in its attempt to subordinate us by removing us from the land and the precious and beautiful knowledge of the feathered serpent, *Quetzalcoatl*.

QUETZALCOATL

Quetzalcoatl carries the energies of the air and the west, or *Cihuatlanpa*, and translates as the feathered serpent (Arce 2016; Villanueva 2013). The epistemological principle of *Quetzalcoatl* offered us the precious and beautiful knowledge of our ancestors, the land, and future liberatory possibilities. Arce explained that this precious and beautiful knowledge is a "merging of our critical self-reflection and the regaining of our collective memory with the obtaining of an awareness of knowledge (both historical and a contemporary understanding of our lived realities)" (2016, 33). This merging is a tool for developing critical consciousness, which is a crucial step towards liberation and community self-determination (Arce 2016). Berta-Ávila emphasized the aspect of choice when the medicine of precious and beautiful knowledge is offered. Berta-Ávila recognized that the choice to develop a critical consciousness "is a process of constant self-reflection. The easier path is to choose one of silence" (2003, 123). To illuminate the challenging path of developing critical consciousness, Berta-Ávila shared the wisdom of Indigenous Mexican elders with a creation story of Quetzalcoatl when he "had to make the decision to leave his people, the Mexicas" (122). He left them with this wisdom:

> I must go, but before I do, I want you to be prepared for what will come. You will face many struggles, but the hardest will be the loss of memory. As time goes by, who you are as a people, your traditions, your values, your language, will all be lost. This loss will cause pain and confusion, but don't despair, for the memory will come back. It will not be easy, many struggles will be endured, but slowly our people will begin to hear the drumbeat of their heart. The sound and feel of the drumbeat will be the signal to claim, that which had been lost so long ago. (122)

The drumbeat brings the embrace of the precious and beautiful knowledge of Indigenous ways of knowing and being as it calls us home. Arce stressed that the epistemological principle of *Quetzalcoatl* positions "students, their families, and their community [as] both bearers and creators of knowledge" (2016, 34). The combined nature of critical self-reflection and precious and beautiful knowledge offers a vantage to develop a radical imaginary (Stovall 2018) with a decolonial lens as we move towards Black liberation and decolonization.

The movement of *Quetzalcoatl*, the feathered serpent, carries the macro knowledge of flight as well as the embodied understanding of micro knowledge experienced through material

conditions. Tupac Enrique Acosta explained that "from the memory of our identity, the knowledge of our collective history, we draw the perspective that draws us to the contemporary reality" (as cited in Arce 2016, 32). The movement of precious and beautiful knowledge calls us home while guiding our steps forward. For the principle of *Quetzalcoatl*, we responded to the following questions: What radicalized you? When you first confronted the serpent, how did that transform your perspective? How does it differ inside institutions and outside institutions? What changed in macro and micro knowledge? During our first meeting, Micaela shared the insight she gained when she contemplated the energies of *Quetzalcoatl*: the colonizer's religion deemed the knowledge of the serpent as the original sin, but a decolonial framing embraces the knowledge of the serpent as precious and beautiful. This insight continues to offer medicine as we carry the intention to embrace the knowledge of the feathered serpent, which brings us home.

The embrace of the feathered serpent, *Quetzalcoatl*, developed our critical consciousness through the combined nature of study and organizing. Valentina was radicalized through the study of Black and Palestinian struggles while learning about Leila Khaled, Assata Shakur, and Claudia Jones. Valentina recognized that her struggles with reading and comprehension in white institutions were supported through collective study and showed her "the need to analyze economics and material conditions of the people through a historical lens" (Davalos 2021, 96). Micaela described moving from only studying theory to finding the courage to take up the risk entailed in organizing. After the trauma of Philando Castile's slaughter by police, Micaela explained, "his death and unjust treatment after his murder, turned my whole world upside down. It radicalized me. *En fin, nunca regresare*" (Davalos 2021, 103). Emily's embrace of the feathered serpent came at a time when she began learning from people with ancestors in Latin America and Africa, both inside and outside of white institutions. Her work in the community taught her that "the liberal approach of working within the legal parameters of an inequitable system reduces the struggle to individual injury. As a result, the structure remains in place without collective empowerment" (Davalos 2021, 116). Importantly, while the feathered serpent may have appeared in white institutions, our embrace and radicalization through embodied knowledge took place outside classroom walls where we were learning in community with others struggling for liberation.

HUITZILOPOCHTLI

Huitzilopochtli manifests as the will to act with the element of fire and the energy of the South, or *Huitzlampa* (Arce 2016; Villanueva 2013). *Huitzilopochtli*, the hummingbird to the left, locates the will to act in the place of our hearts not our heads (Arce 2016; Villanueva 2013). Tupac Enrique Acosta explained that our will to act begins "with the first breath taken by each newborn infant in the realization that this human life we are blessed with is a struggle requiring physical effort for survival. The exertion of this life-sustaining effort evolves into a discipline, a means of maximizing the energy resources available at the human command which in order to have their full effect must be synchronized with the natural cycles" (as cited in Arce 2016, 34). We carry the will to act from birth, and we sustain it when we embrace natural cycles. Arce (2016) adds that

Huitzilopochtli is also symbolic of the sun rising in the winter time. As the will to act, *Huitzilopochtli* develops conscientization through praxis with its integration of critical self-reflection, precious and beautiful knowledge, and the will to act (Berta-Ávila 2003). Reflection and knowledge are incomplete without action. Arce asserted that "the processes of reflection and obtaining and constructing knowledge [are] inadequate unless they [are] acted upon through direct individual, familial, and community action" (2016, 35). The hummingbird in the place of our hearts moves us to collectively analyze material conditions in order to transform them.

For this movement, we responded to the questions: What moves us to work in community with others to take up the revolutionary struggle and what keeps us going? The hummingbird has a 360 movement. Where is the hummingbird getting the willpower from and how do they sustain it? If the hummingbird can sustain their willpower, how can we sustain it in community? The weaving of our stories revealed that the radicalization we experienced through *Quetzalcoatl* is sustained through the gifts of *Huitzilopochtli*. The dialectical nature between individual and collective resistance feeds our willpower and propels us forward. In the spiral motion of *Huitzilopochtli*, willpower feeds an internal resistance that feeds collective resistance, which feeds willpower.

Because *Huitzilopochtli* is in the place of the heart, weaving our stories showed us that it necessitates interdependence cultivated by revolutionary love. We have to build caring communities in our organizing work to sustain our willpower; interdependence is how we combat the destructive individualism of capitalist ideology in colonial machinery. Moreover, we have a responsibility to nourish our willpower because the genocidal systems will suck the life out of us if we don't. Because our will to act depends on interdependence based in revolutionary love, when we lose connection to the hummingbird in the place of our hearts, the burnout that follows can have dire consequences. Ceremony and ritual can nourish our willpower required for sustained revolutionary struggle by developing our discipline. Ceremony and ritual position us to reclaim the health and well-being colonization has fought to steal from us and the land. Lyla June (2022) explained that "ceremony is how we remember to remember."[iv] Ceremony connects us with the generations who have preserved them through over 500 years of colonization while positioning us to pass them on to future generations. The solidarity required for Black liberation and decolonization relies on the interdependence in natural life cycles to sustain a revolutionary spirit. Berta-Ávila argued that interdependence is vital for liberation because "if individuals' purpose does not include working so others can be free, the individuals are only perpetuating the oppression the US government fosters" (2003, 125). The medicine of the *Nahui Ollin* paired with a research methodology that weaves our stories expands tools of solidarity with others by providing an ethical map to guide us in the revolutionary struggle for Black liberation and decolonization.

XIPE TOTEC

Xipe Totec manifests in the east, or *Tlahuitzlampa*, with the element of water, the imagery of springtime, and translates as transformation (Arce 2016; Villanueva, 2013). *Xipe Totec* is the culmination of the three previous movements. Arce (2016) explained that we engage the *Nahui*

Ollin for transformation because it is the culmination of the movements, which follow natural life cycles. Arce highlighted the importance of embracing rather than resisting the transformations that bring a shedding with growth. Arce offered "the new ways of being and knowing must be embraced, for to resist these transformations is to remain static and not develop, to be left behind, to be unevolving and out of synch with the natural life cycles" (36). The guidance offered by the *Nahui Ollin* is not static, which is why the four principles, elements of life, and directions are ever moving and offering growth.

Xipe Totec shows us that within growth is a shedding and releasing as movements flow. Villanueva also emphasized the release found in transformation in her description of *Xipe Totec* as "our source of strength that allows us to transform and renew. We must have strength to shed the old, which may hinder us while accepting and embracing our new consciousness in order to transform" (2013, 32). The transformative cycles offered in the *Nahui Ollin* are "fluid, adaptive, and transformative" because they are intimately bound with natural life cycles (Arce 2016, 35). Arce outlined the transformations offered at each movement, which together comprise a transformative cycle. He explained,

> Once [we] come to reconciliation of [our] personal, familial, and collective history that are liberated from that which was hidden (*Tezcatlipoca*), [we] are forever transformed; once [we] become aware of knowledges that have been subsumed through processes of colonization and have moved forward in constructing new knowledges through [our] developed heightened awareness and critical consciousness (*Quetzalcoatl*), [we] are forever transformed; and once [we] act upon [our] reflections and newfound knowledge in positive, progressive, and creative ways (*Huitzilopochtli*), [we] are forever transformed. (2016, 35-6)

Importantly, as we are transformed, we are called to work with others to collectively transform material conditions in pursuit of Black liberation and decolonization. This calling is the heart of a revolutionary spirit that sees the struggle as a duty to our communities rather than a choice of individual advancement.

For our collaborative autoethnography, we explored *Xipe Totec* by responding to the following questions: Many people ask about the light at the end of the tunnel, the horizon. But, how do we envision the march, the highs and lows? What no longer served a revolutionary purpose that we had to shed in order to renew and build resiliency? Thinking of the environment and the seasons, and how they transform our approach to knowledge, how do we learn to take knowledge from how things grow and die instead of colonialism's warping of the calendar? In the context of revolutionary organizing, our stories explored the shedding involved in transformation, which is found in the inherent risk in both direct action and sustained organizing. We each had to shed a naivete that did not understand the nuances of risk inherent in the work. We also had to shed naïve ideas that a person's identity determines their politics, that we could avoid harm by not putting

ourselves on the line for our people, and that nonprofits are able to walk their talk when their work relies on funding from capitalists.

The transformation offered through revolutionary organizing relies on a foundation of revolutionary love. Importantly, revolutionary love is not a passive love but a fierce love that moves us to continue to struggle; it grows along the dialectical nature between love for our people and anger at the destructive systems. Anger can be a potential catalyst for transformation, but sustained anger is not healthy. Anger is a common theme across our stories. As a result, we discussed how anger is often a symptom of loss, but we only touched on the loss that is behind the overt anger that appeared. Our stories speak to the need to heal to embrace the gifts of *Huitzilopochtli*. We have a responsibility to dig deeper into this loss to ensure anger as a catalyst rather than a stagnant anger that perpetuates harm and often derails the work. We struggle from a place of love for our people so that we may heal the trauma from generations of colonization. Revolutionary love enables us to heal the trauma of colonization and whiteness, and it becomes our bond with others. It bonds us to others before us, alongside us, and after us as we meet our duty to struggle for the liberation of people and land.

OUR DANCE WITH CAE PAIRED WITH THE *NAHUI OLLIN* WITH THE ROOTS OF CHILE AND PALESTINE

Writing a collaborative autoethnography with the *Nahui Ollin* was a beautiful, empowering, and insightful experience. What impacted me the most was the tenderness of vulnerability and self-reflection of our identities and life experiences that have transformed us to who we are today and will continue to shape us as individuals in an ecosystem of struggle, solidarity, and resistance to achieve liberation. I was not familiar with the *Nahui Ollin* framework so moving through my story with the four movements was a new experience that brought anxiety but also empowerment and comfort. At first, I struggled getting in touch with the *Nahui Ollin* and my story mainly because focusing on telling my story is a challenge; it's a voice I did not prioritize because I did not find it important or interesting. The support I received through this collaborative autoethnography and the *Nahui Ollin* was a new way of embracing and reclaiming myself while shedding the externalized feeling of not belonging. This writing experience was a reinforcement of the organizing work I do and a motivation to continue building and learning with the masses to unite the working-class power. The collective process of sharing the similarities in our stories through collaborative autoethnography with the guidance of the *Nahui Ollin* helped me understand the desire I have to connect with the land of my ancestors. Through the experiences of my grandparents, parents, and myself, as generational immigrants, the connection to the land has been destroyed and purposely used against us.

WITH AFRO-INDIGENOUS COLOMBIAN ROOTS

When writing and using collaborative autoethnography with the *Nahui Ollin*, I recalled my words in my honors thesis that first led me to embrace new language, seemingly metaphorical, deeply spiritual, and exceptionally true. Residing in the borderlands, the new mestiza learns to shift

identities between contexts, to bridge cultures, and thus, to come up with new strategies. While the experiences of multiple shifting identities is painful, the mestiza not only sustains contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else, a perspective that includes rather than excludes. I remember thinking, "Could this be what resistance looks like within me? Would it be possible for me to turn this outward? To shape my surroundings?" These thoughts consumed me because it forced me to imagine and reimagine so many parts of me and how I understood the world around me. The *Nahui Ollin* embodies the same epiphany; it is possible to think of this world, its social and political suffering, and our place or role in it, through a radical imaginary. So much power and empowerment come from this deeply rooted, spiritual point of view. I could not deny how deeply awakened my consciousness felt. And it was only a beginning.

I came to see metaphorical and geographically created borders. See them, know them, and deem them absolutely unnecessary. I blame them for our diasporic separation. Seeing them through the *Nahui Ollin*, four movements, was almost like music. The epiphany was once again clear. If music could transcend borders freely, why couldn't we? Our Black and Indigenous ancestors? If the word 'radical' could have an image it would be this one, *Nahui Ollin Libre*: Four Movements Freely. I found another way to free myself. Maybe even outwardly free those in the world around me. It then became clear that 'me' and 'us' are intimately woven together. It was never about those who created the borders or truncated the *Nahui Ollin*. At this point, it was liberating to know I did not have to emphasize or center the pain, trauma, sadness, and anger of whiteness and its pervasiveness. Our ancestors are listening and they heard me call out for them—to be cognizant of the Mexica ancestors, of those around me, and to center our truth.

WITH XICANA ROOTS

I doubted the worth of my story before I had the opportunity to weave it with others. I was intimately familiar with the power of story and had been studying the need for counterstories to disrupt majoritarian stories that normalize capitalism and US imperialism encased in whiteness (Delgado 1990; Stovall 2018; Yosso 2006). I still doubted the worth of my story alone because I couldn't see what my story in isolation had to offer others. A mentor had been encouraging me to write my story, and it wasn't until I stumbled upon CAE that I was eager to write an autoethnography. Using CAE with the guidance of the *Nahui Ollin* allowed me to not simply write my story but to reclaim it, and in turn, the medicine of the *Nahui Ollin* claimed me. I sent my story to the others on the first day of my fourth 13-year cycle. Later that day, I was unexpectedly invited into circle with Mexica women who carry the *danza* tradition. During the *limpia* they offered me, the blessing of their song welcomed me home into the arms of *mis abuelos* who never had the chance to hold me. In that claiming, I renewed my commitment to the revolutionary struggle for Black liberation and decolonization with the blessings of my ancestors.

The opportunity to write my story with the guidance of the *Nahui Ollin* has been the beginning of a journey to live intentionally with its medicine in all aspects of my life. The physical, spatial, scientific, and philosophical dimensions of its medicine bloom in ways that offer generative growth and healing. It becomes my center when I feel tossed about by the tumultuous intentions of capitalism and imperialism's limitless destruction in the name of profit. Embodying

its cycles of transformation enables me to draw a gentle strength from those who have sustained the revolutionary struggle while creating paths to expand its offering in collective ways whether it's in schools, community education and organizing spaces, or even virtual spaces that connect us to each other. The medicine that grows through the cracks in the sidewalks on the street where I live reminds me of future potentialities in weaving our stories with the guidance of the *Nahui Ollin* as we widen *el camino* for Black liberation and decolonization.

OFFERINGS

While our stories, in and of themselves, carry power, weaving them to cultivate their medicine strengthens their message and their reach. Using collaborative autoethnography with the *Nahui Ollin* offers a path to disrupt dominant ideologies of objectivity, neutrality, and individualism as well as oppressive power dynamics in research. This path also disrupts settler colonial logics by claiming the medicine colonization has sought to destroy for over 500 years. Moreover, CAE with a decolonial framework offered us the opportunity to grow within predominantly white institutions that seek to sever us from the knowledge that our ancestors have carried and that we continue to carry within the very institutions that sought to destroy it. During our collective data analysis, we all commented on the vulnerability required for claiming the worth of our story. The dominant ideologies in whiteness and settler colonial logics shape schools to tell us our stories have no worth and to disregard them when assessing learning. CAE with a decolonial framework teaches us how wrong they are while positioning us to use the interdependence in natural cycles to keep us rooted to the land and each other as we struggle for Black liberation and decolonization.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Emily Davalos is an uninvited guest in Kinłani/Flagstaff, Arizona. She has a PhD in curriculum and instruction focused on Ethnic Studies.

Valentina Jadue is a research analyst and community organizer in Tequesta Land/ Miami, FL. She has a BA in Psychology and focuses on Restorative Justice in community spaces.

Micaela Pérez Ibarra lives in Jersey City, New Jersey. She has an MA in Diplomacy and International Relations.

CONTACT:

Emily Davalos, Emily.Davalos@gmail.com
Valentina Jadue, vale.jadue@gmail.com
Micaela Pérez Ibarra, Michelle.perez327@gmail.com

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