

DECOLONIZING PRACTICES, INTERSECTIONALITY & AESTHETICS: IDENTITY, CONSCIOUSNESS & RESISTANCE.

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ABSTRACT

Overall, the primary role in this issue was to create a space for scholars/artists/activists to share co-learned knowledges, testimonios, auto/biographies, stories, experiences, methods, research, as well as their own challenges and struggles while reclaiming, negotiating, or situating into their own paths. The issue works like our Borderlands, as a metaphorical terrain where shared information not only carefully addresses the paradoxical process of working towards decolonizing but also awareness that this work is being done within our own colonized/colonizing organizations, environments, and minds.

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listen
the silent scream,
a guttural silent scream
with no-sounds,
no vibrations,
no air-waves

listen
no!
not with your ears
with your soul,
with your guts,
with your heart

the scream is silent
we do not recognize its sounds

is full of past sounds
is full of forgotten words
echoing in our impotent vocal cords
vocal cords able
to sound only the tyrants' languages
those foreign noises
won't ever stop!
(Espinosa-Dulanto 2023)

DISPLACED

The host editors of this issue are faculty in a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). We met in the unsettling path towards working/understanding the process of decolonization. Like Tuck & Yang (2012), we believe that decolonization is not a metaphor to “improve our societies and schools [which is vital]” but “about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (1). In that spirit, our initial idea was to weave testimonios across disciplines to de-center white supremacy, white privilege, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and settler colonial logics. The hope was to create a space for scholars/artists/activists to share co-learned knowledges, testimonios, auto/biographies, stories, experiences, methods, research, as well as challenges and struggles while reclaiming, negotiating, or situating into their own paths towards understanding their own processes of decolonization. The task of building this special issue involved a lot more than academics. As editors, in the process of curating this work, we have learned to accept and embrace our own struggles, not only confronting and navigating academia as Latinx indigenous/Mestizo people. For them, Mestizaje is an identity on the flesh deeply tied to social and political structures and embodies multiple subjectivities and histories. It’s tied both to a world of possibilities and a colonial history of racial, gender, social, economic and language hierarchies. More importantly, as Latinx indigenous/Mestizo people, we

must accept the paradoxical implications of being a part of the colonizer/colonized unit, like two sides of a coin,

“the decolonial desires of white, non- white, immigrant, postcolonial, and oppressed people, can similarly be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually further settler colonialism” (Tuck&Yang, 2012:1)

Speaking our truths comes with challenges, including marginalization in an academia mired with paternalism, racism/colorism, sexism and homophobia. Speaking truth to power can be daunting, but it is liberating and necessary. As minoritized peoples, we have found multiple ways to do this, through art, poetry, testimonios (Espinosa-Dulanto, 2018) and by contesting the traditional Eurocentric methodologies of colonialist/imperialist indoctrination. We look to expand the archive of testimonio decolonial praxis toward a transcultural dialogue and conscientização (Freire, 1968). Thus, this special issue includes scholarly contributions that intersect the personal, the social, and the political, following the tradition started with Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness—that has full existence in the liminal/interstitial space of Nepantla (1987, 2015). It works with Perez’s decolonial imaginary that seeks to reflect, situate, & negotiate the contradictions of coloniality (1999). Latinx/Chicanx/Afro/Indigenous feminist *testimonios* of decoloniality or decolonial praxis, in which testimonios are used as a tool to theorize oppression, resistance, subjectivity and agency (Latina Feminist Group, 2001) centering our conocimiento/knowledge in relationship to indigeneity and navigating the metaphorical/geographical borders of identity (Anzaldúa 1987, 2015; Perez 1999; Delgado Bernal et al. 2006). It pairs with Quijano to expose the colonial passing of information, the genocide of knowledges, as well as uncovering the role of academia in perpetuating colonial mindsets devaluing indigenous epistemologies (Quijano, 2000). It interlocks with Lugones’ positions on the coloniality of gender as well as her inquisitory embracing/sharing of women’s worlds. To truly understand an “other,” entails entering in their worlds as well as opening a door into ours. It involves an interaction, a game of give and take (1998, 2016). It is risky. C. Rodriguez’s inquisitorial thinking voice and methods of decolonial expression, guides us to connect the stories, the testimonies with the decolonial efforts and practices (2018, 2023). With Lugones’ and Rodriguez’s guidance, we believe this special issue shares the efforts to decolonize our practices and is a step forward beyond theory.

The issue works like our *Borderlands*, as a metaphorical terrain where shared information not only carefully addresses the paradoxical process of working towards decolonizing but also awareness that work is being done within our own colonized/colonizing organizations, environments, and minds.

"Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding." (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1963:36)

The issue is delivered in three sections, in the first section ***Inter/weaving, Inter/lacing: Consciousness & Intersectionality*** we start with Lomeli’s metaphors of identity and resistance... as water that “molds itself ...as immigrants flexible to change...like the river moving from place to place to or be forced into a container for containment, consumption, and evaluation.” Continues with *Femtoring Trenza: Employing a Plática~Testimonio Approach to Co-create Knowledge and Survive Academia* (Río Lopez, Claudia Yolanda Casillas and Judith Flores Carmona) sharing plática methodology feminista testimonios to co-create knowledge, challenge the corrosiveness of academic spaces and foundational to surviving and navigating academia. Kennedy & Perez’s *I See You: A Dual Testimonio of The Latina Doctoral Experience* share their testimonios of struggles as females, academic scholars, and human beings within a boxed academic society. *The Decolonial Offerings of Collaborative Autoethnography with the Nahui Ollin* of Davalos, Jadue, and Ibarra present how they have strengthened the power of a single story by reclaiming generative knowledge with the land. Furthermore, collaborative research disrupts settler colonial logics and power differentials on how research should be conducted. The complexity of our struggles continues and is expressed *In Testimonio of Cultural Homelessness Finding Flow and Harmony in Nепantla* where Guzman Foster disclosed not only painful memories of racialized trauma, but deep intracultural division in the Latinx group. *Honoring Rasquachismo in el Teatro Adriana* illustrates how exclusionary notions of colonized theater are challenged by the implementation and success of *rasquache* aesthetic, with its indigenous roots to foster creativity, collective creation, and intentional purpose. O’Donald, in *Telarañas: Untangling My Pain* is fueled by contradictions and chose to write words that have never been spoken in her *familia*. Drawing from Anzaldúa’s Coatlicue stage, she connects feelings, thoughts and transnational academic knowledge all drenched in aching daughter’s love. Based on Perez’s decolonial imaginary and decolonial critical race feminism, Gallardo Zamora writes from lived experience as a queer mestizx jota that shares their “papelitos guardados” through poetry and art in *The Destroyer & the Destroyed: The Testimonio of a Fragmented Mestizx Jota Entrapped inside a White Straight(jacket)*. To complicate further the decolonial imaginary of race and gender, Vasquez in *We Expected a Normal Latinx, Not a Chicano Like You* explores its own, Chicano identity within the constraints of the colonial logics imposed by White academia as problematic, filled with particular racist stereotypes, expectations and erasure. What we find is that the umbrella term Latinx hides a hierarchy of privilege.

The second section, ***Intersectionality & Aesthetics: Identity & Resistance*** begins with a creative piece, *Repast: A Collective Autoethnographic Process Of Meaning Making*. There, the authors display in conversations and writings what each member has processed in the momentous blink of their collective lived history. This connects with Doering’s Latinx identity shaped by expectations and a history of colonization and neo-colonialism. The next reflection uses Lugones as a framework for understanding space, place and resistance by situating indigeneity and confronting colorism, *Complicating Space Exploring Lugones as An Odawa Native*. We also received several reflections which addressed the difficulties and prejudices academics encounter

as they navigate higher education in the United States, to find their identities assaulted by a white patriarchal culture, *La Encrucijada: Latina Consciousness, Academia, and Imposed Identity* (Doering), *Tales of an academic immigrant* (Calderon), and *How Doctoral Chicanas Resist White Supremacist Political Erasure Through Muxerista Mentoring* (Garcia, Gonzales, and Estrada). These reflections show how intersectional beings navigate binary categories within the U.S.A educational system. Another attempt to contest from within and develop new frameworks to deconstruct the racism within the institutions is *Exploring Awareness Through Race-Based Epistemologies* where Briseño shares a process of unpacking colonial/imperialist education through critical race lens, as her awareness that formal schooling in the USA has been a tool to maintain white patriarchal dominance. Family was an integral aspect as the authors reflected on generational knowledge, preserved through parents and grandparents. In *Remembering our Ancestors through Convivienza, Pláticas, y Testimonios* the authors share pláticas with their family as a form to create auto-historia teoria in praxis as they learned indigenous traditional healing practices which strengthen our bonds to our ancestors. *Beyond the Word and the Womb: Parenting as Anzaldúan Atravesade*, Danielson places her Anzaldúan atravesade parenting testimonio in conversation with decolonial frameworks to assert that “a queer of color lens can play a powerful role in the decolonization of restrictive and binary modes of parenting and family” as she shares her queer position with the mainstream “mother” role. Powerful and painful discussion.

As we stated earlier, this issue reflects the terrain of our USA/Mexico borderlands, as such, the sections are meant to organize extraordinary pieces for possible pláticas not to separate them in conventional divides. In this third section, ***Inter/weaving, Inter/lacing: Decolonizing Practices***, the offerings highlight work based on decolonial methodologies addressing issues related to language/power, schooling/welfare system, gender/queer, and religion/spirituality. Settler colonialism is embedded in all institutions including foster care and the child welfare system, Ocasio’s *Invisible Resistance: BIPOC Girls and Gender-Expansive Youth in Foster Care Resisting School Push Out* touches almost all these issues as she reflects on gendered racialized stereotypes that have created a school to prison pipeline, criminalizing the survival and resistance of BIPOC youth). Learning from the experiences in gifted programs, sadly, the foundation still racist; hidden curricula solely acknowledging Eurocentric perspectives, ignoring indigeneity, and languages other than English, Boley’s *Gifted Programming Identification Procedures: A Hidden Curriculum* linked diverse ways of conceptualizing giftedness to decenter Western ways of understanding, informing, and ordering the field of gifted education. She calls to centering indigenous positionality and provides an educational model which includes Navajo perspectives. In *Science para El Barrio*, Peña reminds us that Western Scientific thought attempts to enculturate students into the culture, knowledge, techniques, values and worldview of academic Eurocentric science and far removed from the lived experiences of our youth. In his teaching, Peña encourages students learn from each other’s’ cultural knowledge, to develop a practice of science open to multiple ways of knowing and to include their indigenous epistemologies. In this issue we also explore language as it affects our detribalized identities which have made our original languages but a memory. Although indigenous languages still survive, for many of us, Spanish—if not English—was our

first language because of losing our native culture to Spanish colonization. Currently, under the colonial power of English for many, Spanish represents their mestizaje and indigeneity. Two pieces shared their successful efforts on conducting programas and research supporting Spanish as a decolonial language. *Hampering the Dogmatization Within the System by Building an Itinerant Practice in Bilingual Education and Dual-Language Programs* by Orozco & Whitacre reflects on dual-language programs and the transformation of implementation through curricularized language and personal pedagogies. Lozano-Soto, Wickert, Hernández, and Maldonado's *Affirmations of Bilingualism, Biliteracy and Binationalism in the Cali-Baja Borderlands: Transformational Politics of Liminality, Counter-Erasure and Borderizing* critically reflected on how their research group had support bilingual, biliterate and binational scholars to strengthening their identities and successfully navigate Eurocentric, white-supremacist, monolingual Institutions of Higher Education. Through Perez's decolonial imaginary and decolonial critical race feminism, Espinoza, Resendiz & Espinoza's *El Corrido de La Redada de los "41 Maricones": Decolonizing El Porfiriato and its Queer Signifier*, critically examine indigenous sexuality and the development of colonialist homophobia, in early 20th century Mexico, because of compulsory Catholicism and a Euro-centric government. On a different perspective, Martinez Prieto, *Spirituality among Mexican Transnational Teaching Youth: Towards Decolonialization and Humanization of Research* explores the spiritual trajectories of Mexican nationals as transnational students, how they connect spirituality and religion when faced with U.S. racism and oppression. The USA educational system clearly demarks and fosters marginalization, specially of people whose first language is not English. Nevertheless, community and cooperation, as emphasized in Garcia's *Think of the world we carry with us: Latina Women Changing the conversation of Parent Involvement* shared Latinx parents cleverly navigating their children's schools through community gardening and in connection to the land. Tied to our connection to the land, there is always a spiritual component. Domingues's *EntreMundos/Criss-Crossing Early Childhood Ecological Pedagogy(ies) with Nagualismo as Embodied Inquiry* proposes an eco-model based on Anzaldua's nagualismo for embodied inquiry by engaging with Mexica cosmology and incorporating indigenous spirituality.

The colonial world is a compartmentalized world... the singularity of the colonial context lies in the fact that economic reality, inequality, and enormous disparities in lifestyles never manage to mask the human reality... The colonist is not content with stating that the colonized world has lost its values or worse never possessed any. The "native" is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. (8) The colonist makes history. His life is an epic, an odyssey. (14) The colonist's world is a hostile world, a world which excludes yet at the same time incites envy. We have seen how the colonized always dream of taking the colonist's place. Not of becoming a colonist, but of replacing him. (16)

This issue is all about struggle, it is all about intimacy, it is all about our negotiations in private and public spheres. All are messed up, contradictions and alliances where individual and collective identities begin with a birthing process at the crossroads of our embraced indigeneity or Mestizaje with the certainty of colonialism and imperialism. Decolonizing our identity is a never-ending journey as we face settler colonialism and Eurocentric patriarchal white supremacy every day. Navigating the decolonial process is different for everyone and we negotiate our identities as we move through white patriarchal colonial systems. Each of our contributors has faced similar traumas, but we are all in different stages of our decolonial journey.

We end this introduction with a quote from F. Fannon that has helped us not only to understand but also to embrace the fight and the difficult, shattering road ahead of us,

The arrival of the colonist signified syncretically the death of indigenous society, cultural lethargy, and petrification of the individual. For the colonized, life can only materialize from the rotting cadaver of the colonist. Such then is the term-for-term correspondence between the two arguments. But it so happens that for the colonized this violence is invested with positive, formative features because it constitutes their only work. This violent praxis is totalizing since each individual represents a violent link in the great chain, in the almighty body of violence rearing up in reaction to the primary violence of the colonizer. (50)

CONTRIBUTORS:

Miryam Espinosa-Dulanto's teaching, research, and writing draw on decolonial indigenous feminist research methodologies. Peruanita, inmigrante desplazada, con pasaporte azul, con raíces nómades y amores arrinconados, caminando al ocaso, con pasos de nostalgia, refugiada en la frontera mexicana, donde está aprendiendo, descubriendo, en español, inglés, tejano, peruano, y en valle-chingón. Miryam's work has appeared both in leading journals, handbooks, peer reviewed books, and regional/local publications that evidence the broad interdisciplinary, community based, and intellectual curiosity of her engagement.

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