Chican@ Artivistas: East Los Angeles Trenches Transborder Tactics

Martha E. Gonzalez

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Professor Michelle Habell-Pallán, Chair
Professor Angela B. Ginorio
Professor María Elena García
Professor Shannon K. Dudley
Professor Marisol Berriós Miranda
GSR: Professor Sonnet Retman

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University of Washington Seattle
ABSTRACT

Chican@ Activistas: East Los Angeles Trenches Transborder Tactics

Martha E. Gonzalez

Chair of the Supervisory Committee: Associate Professor Michelle Habell- Pallán
Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies Department

This dissertation is a Chicana feminist analysis focused on the resistances to the impact of commercial markets on embodied performance in translocal Chican@ and Mexican@ communities in California, Veracruz, Mexico and Seattle Washington and the degrees to which capital deconstructs embodiment in order to harness its creative power. Importantly, it is an analysis of the techniques, and tools that East Los Angeles Chican@ activists, or artist/activists have developed in tandem with their translocal communities through the practice of convivencia—profound practices of convening as community outside of commercial markets.

Through my experience in performance practice, feminist interpretive praxis, and analysis as a participant observer in community building efforts through embodied performance practices, this dissertation will highlight a methodology of community building utilizing musical tools and social techniques focused on participatory music and dance practices, collective songwriting processes as well as digital technologies that include recording equipment and social media. The goal is to map and theorize individual and community momentum of Chican@ activists from Eastside neighborhoods as they harness creative power to imagine and re-construct various elements of their communities such as food sovereignty, money recycling, self-sustained community services, artistic networks, spaces (physical, spiritual, ideological) and knowledge production. By channeling the power and participatory practice of music, art, theatre, and other forms of
creative expression as dialectic tools Chican@ artivistas are challenging capital markets social arrangements of music and other forms of creative expression.

In this way, Chican@ artivista praxis of community building through music and art is an exercise in hope. When we come to understand that “love is a powerful force that challenges and resists domination,” hope is that which lead us to internalize this through our very actions.¹ Therefore hope must be acknowledged, valued and freed from colonialisist thought (cynicism, indifference) in order for imagination to be exercised. In this sense, I seek to create a hermeneutic arc between the Chican@ artivista musical experience and how it functions in community to show how these efforts translate into acts of hope. Through ethnographic narratives, oral histories, participatory observation, close readings of culture production, embodied musical experience both on the stage and in participatory music and dance practice; I will demonstrate how the Chican@ artivista experience in music and other creative expressions is one that is relational and deeply committed to social justice.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the East Los Chican@ Artivistas especially my partner Quetzal Flores. Although this dissertation bares my name, it was a collaborative effort. We struggled, thrived, and theorized these moments together and along side our community.
INTRODUCTION

“So the circumstances of our lives and our labor enable what we can know.”
—Priti Ramamurthy

“[We] need teorias that will enable us to interpret what happens in the world, that will explain how and why we relate to certain people in specific ways....We need theories that will point out ways to maneuver between our particular experiences and the necessity of forming our own categories and theoretical models for the patterns we uncover. We need theories that examine the implications of situations and look at what’s behind them.”
—Gloria Anzaldúa

I have traveled the world as a professional musician. The commodity which I have provided in exchange for monetary compensation is the labor of sound in the form of music. My labor as a musician for over twenty years enables “what I know,” and as a result what I will share and theorize in this dissertation. Music experienced on many fronts, sites and social locations demonstrated to me that music could exist in many ways. Some experiences in music have shamed and oppressed me, but there have also been music experiences that have allowed me to see how it could be a deliberate act of love and ongoing source of empowerment for self and community. Music in this sense is a tool that is alive and malleable by the will and hands of those who envision social change.

So what happens when the meaning of music changes throughout your life? Better yet, what happens when a music experience changes the way you live your life? When it challenges how you view the world and as a result, changes core ideas of self? When music is so often seen as a commodity, something incidental in one’s life, or as a “sound track” to what you are really living, a disruption in a music belief system can be emotionally and spiritually cataclysmic. Theorizing through the lens of my own experiences within music markets as well as music in communities elucidates the range of possible political positions and social transformations enabled by music practice. To this end, this dissertation explains my transformation, from the musician my father

2 G. Anzaldúa, Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera. (Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), xxv.
wanted me to be, to what I have become. A Chicana *artivista* (artist/activist). Furthermore, this dissertation analyzes the structures of thought and feelings that shaped my father’s vision and explores more healthy alternative possibilities of music engagement.

*Chican@ Artivistas: East Los Angeles Trenches Transborder Tactics* is a Chicana³ feminist analysis focused on the resistances to the impact of commercial markets on embodied performances in translocal⁴ Chican@ and Mexican@ communities in California (Los Angeles and Santa Ana), Veracruz, Mexico, and Seattle, Washington. Importantly, it is an analysis of the social techniques and tools that East Los Angeles Chican@ *artivistas*⁵ have developed in tandem with their translocal communities through the practice of *convivencia*. I define *convivencia* in this dissertation as a way of being present to each other. It is a profound and deliberate practice of convening as community outside of commercial markets. In this dissertation, I focus mostly on *convivencia* experiences mostly thought music praxis.

Through my experience in performance practice, Chicana feminist interpretive praxis, and analysis as a participant observer in community building efforts, this dissertation will highlight a methodology of community building utilizing musical tools and social techniques focused on participatory music and dance practices, collective songwriting processes, as well as digital technologies that include recording equipment and social media. The goal is to map and theorize individual and community momentum of Chican@ *artivistas* in Eastside neighborhoods as they harness creative power to imagine and re-construct various aspects of their communities such as food sovereignty, money recycling, self-sustained community services, artistic networks, space (physical, spiritual, ideological) and knowledge production.

³ This dissertation is informed by my experience as a Chican@ *artivista*. I was born and raised in East Los Angeles, and have been part of the artist/activist community in East Los Angeles since 1995.

⁴ I borrow “translocal” from anthropologist Lynn Stephen. The term translocal disrupts the social science binaries-global/local, local/national, transnational- and instead offers a view of the “social field” that makes visible the material survival strategies of these communities that abstract theorizations can miss (22). It also suggests a dialogue rather than a unidirectional cultural and social influence.

⁵ I specifically refer to the Chicano artists that began to identify themselves with the term *artivista* beginning 1993 and into the present. I acknowledge that there were Chicano artists before this time inspired by East L.A life, however the Chican@ art movement that I am referring to is distinct by the ways in which they utilize their artistic and creative expression as dialectic tools.
By recounting personal and community practices, I will demonstrate how capital markets have been instrumental in individual and community arrangements of music and art practice. In this way, I will later make clear how art, music and culture are re-deployed and used by Chican@ artivistas as a way of challenging the current social relations of music and as a way of building community.

Chicana Feminist Praxis

As a field of inquiry in the most general sense, feminism aims to question socially valued differences between men and women, be they biological or societal norms. We can generally state that feminism is about social justice. Thus, it is important to the field of feminism and to any de-colonial project, for that matter, to gain an in-depth understanding as to how power is organized in order to deconstruct the rule and order of oppression. In this way, auto-ethnography and participant observation is important to my study. As Chicana feminist María Lugones states:

“To understand feminism in a de-colonial vein is to do several things at once, the doing itself requiring a multiple perception/vision. The multiplicity in the exercise is constituted as a sensing/perceiving/understanding of the structural as well as the nuanced intimate layers of dominance and resistance in tension, in a gamut that constructs and is constructed by selves, practices, the fabric of everyday living.”

I approach my analysis of Chican@ artivista tactics through multiple analytic lenses, perception/visions, from the everyday living of community music to the stage. For this reason I utilized auto-ethnography as a method because it brings an intimacy to the study that can deepen theorizations, especially concerning Chican@ artivista practices and the social relations of music. As Gloria Anzaldúa states in the opening passage, we need teorias (theories) that will, “point out ways to maneuver between our particular experiences and the necessity of forming our own categories and theoretical models for the patterns we uncover.”

I suggest that my experience informs my theorizations in this dissertation. And, in the trajectory of Chicana feminist theorists seek to support, value and add to the

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7 Looking further into a De-Colonial agenda, Tami Spry has said that, “Autoethnographic writing resists Grand Theorizing and the façade of objective research that decontextualizes subjects and searches for singular truth” (Crawford,1996; Denzin, 1997; Ellis &Bochner, 1996; Reed Donahay, 1997; Secklin, 1997).
8 G. Anzaldúa, Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera. (Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), xxv.
importance of embodied knowledge theory (Anzaldúa 1989, Sandoval 2000, L.P Huber, Cruz, Latina Feminist Group 2001). Furthermore, auto-ethnography allows me the authoritative voice to say, “I was there,” and I have been part of the East Los Angeles artist community since the mid 1990’s. By the same token, I acknowledge that my interpretation of any given moment, scene or incident is one of many interpretations and experiences within the varied and growing community of Chican@ artivistas.

In another sense, this dissertation is an academic document derived from my testimonio as a Chicana who, having theorized through the tools of music, (lyricism) now turns to an academic audience.⁹ I acknowledge that my project is ambitious in its approach to not only account for my childhood and adult memories in music but to situate these memories in their historical and spatial contexts. And, as I narrate my experiences throughout this dissertation, I simultaneously seek to make visible the systemic structures that have given my experience currency certain that I am not alone.

In this sense, through a Chicana feminist praxis and other feminist methodologies, I write about the social relations of music. However, I write about the social relations of music as a way of arriving at a feminist praxis and insight. In this way, I aim to achieve what ethnomusicologist Tim Rice accomplishes in his articulation of Klezmer music and culture in May it Fill Your Soul: Experiencing Bulgarian Music that is, to create a “hermeneutic arc” between the musical experience and interpretation.¹⁰ Similarly, I seek to demonstrate the hermeneutic arc between communal music practice and my Chican@ artivista interpretation in order to demonstrate how Chican@ artivista community efforts translate into hope and imagination in the face of adversity. By studying Chican@ artivista methods of community building through music, art and culture, I explore how music, music practice, and the value of music are socially constructed.

I suggest that Chican@ artivista praxis of community building through music and art is an exercise in hope. Through auto-ethnographic narratives, participatory observation, close readings of culture production, embodied musical experience both on the stage and in participatory music and dance practice, I will demonstrate how the Chican@ artivista experience in music and other creative expressions is one that is

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⁹ I am joined by many scholars in stating that music lyrics can indeed impart theory.

relational and deeply committed to social justice generated by feelings of love for struggling communities. When we come to understand that “love is a powerful force that challenges and resists domination,” hope is that which leads us to internalize this through our very actions.\textsuperscript{11} For hope must be acknowledged, valued and freed from colonialist thought in order for imagination to be exercised.\textsuperscript{12} Crafting a method that deploys auto-ethnographic narratives, participatory observation, close readings of culture production, embodied musical experiences both on the stage and in participatory music and dance practice, I will demonstrate how the Chican@ \textit{artivista} experience in music and other creative expressions is one that is relational and deeply committed to social justice.

\textbf{A Clarification in Terms}

I use the terms “Chicana feminist” or “U.S Third World feminists” in reference to the movement of scholars who developed criticism of the enterprise of early women studies discourse and epistemologies. Nineteenth century feminism had historically collapsed, negated, ignored or found the categories of race, class, nationality, and sexuality as irrelevant within the general feminist political struggles and by extension academic discourse.\textsuperscript{13} While focusing on body politic and early analytic deconstruction of patriarchal systems, and the absence of a reflexive look at race, class, and sexuality failed to be interrogated.\textsuperscript{14} Early feminist discourse, although centered on the body, continued to abstract the categories of race, class, sexuality and the ways in which they intersected to shape ones experience. “Woman” as already constituted became the focus from which a set of methodologies were codified and hence, reduced to a “Western feminism.”\textsuperscript{15} The “discursive colonization” or the political and ideological power of the construction of “woman” as homogenous subject ignored the regional, and historical variances that shape a unique experience and by extension subject formation. Audre Lorde explains:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{11} b. hooks. \textit{Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism}, (Boston, MA, South End Press, 1981), 29.
\textsuperscript{12} With an understanding that knowledge is closely related to power, I look at post-colonialism or post-colonial discourse as an area of inquiry that investigates how the roots of colonial influence continues to thrive especially in the ideological realm (Said 1978, Moraga & Anzaldúa 1981, Sandoval 2000, Tuhiwai-Smith 1999).
\textsuperscript{15} Mohanty, \textit{Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity}, 53.
\end{flushleft}
“To imply...that all women suffer the same oppression simply because we are women is to lose sight of the many varied tools of patriarchy.”

Early feminist assumptions or “feminist universalism” became the primary reason for the need to make visible the infinite unique realities of women of color in the U.S and across the globe in order to gain a better understanding of the multiple systems of oppression.

With this understanding U.S. Third World feminist intellectual work such as Anzaldúa (1983), Lorde (1984), and hooks (1989) to name a few, acknowledges that “feminisms” abound in the world and thus multiple resistances, styles and ways of dismantling regional patriarchies. U.S. Third World feminism then, is a move to “create a definition that expands what ‘feminist’ means to us.”

The plurality of scholars and allies that have since borrowed, contributed, and expanded U.S Third World feminist concerns continue to engage in the deconstruction of global patriarchies, discourses, and epistemologies that derived from colonial histories.

Art

I must clarify what I mean by ‘artistic’, ‘art’ or creative expression, as I will use these interchangeably. I define art as any one medium of creative expression including but not limited to: music, visual art, theatre, and dance.

Art or creative expressions are oftentimes thought to be free of subjectivities (race, class, gender, sexuality, nation) in content. Music, for example, is often thought to manifest from objective inspiration. A popular saying in reference to music - is that it is a ‘universal language.’ However, assuming that music is a ‘universal language,’ denies intersectional realities embedded in the sounds and lyrics of music. That is, it denies the plethora of historical trajectories and cultures that have informed the multiplicity of aesthetics embedded in any given sound a respective culture might deem as “music.” Similarly, “art for art's sake” is a common phrase that implies an absent subjectivity in creative output. By the same token, we can assume that the phrase “art for art's sake” is a recognition that subjectivity indeed exists in music, and thus “art for art’s sake” is a call

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17 M. Lugones, “Toward a Decolonial Feminism”. *Hypatia* 25, no. 4: 742-759
to remove it. In this sense when one considers the historical, regional and aesthetic specificity of cultural production, there is nothing ‘universal’ about art or music. As feminist music theorist Susan McClary argues, music is never objective or organically organized, but rather “is always dependent on the conferring of social meaning.”

Form

As a way of drawing out to the multiple perceptions and visions that Lugones deems as a de-colonial feminism, this dissertation will experiment in form. I will shift between personal experience/memory, ethnographic data, and scholarly analysis. This Chicana feminist praxis is following the trajectory of work pre-established by Chican@ and Black Feminist theorists such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and Audre Lorde to name a few.

Chapter Break Down

Chapter one entitled, “La Cruz de Olvido” (“The Burden of Loss”) is about my father’s vision of music, as shaped by Mexican nationalism and capitalism. My early experience in music and brief life background is relevant to my Chican@ artivista formation and praxis, for I examine early subjective ideas of music practice shaped by my father’s conceptions of success, and how his views were shaped by ideas of “progress” and “modernity” instilled by the thriving Mexican national cultural production and rhetoric of his time. The work of Mexican cultural production theorists such as Andrea Noble and Juan Pablo Silva Escobar is an important touchstone concerning early Mexican cinema as post-Revolución nation building tools. In addition Bonfil Batalla’s concept of “Mexico Profundo” and the “imaginary Mexico” are important concepts for my study. Batalla articulates an ideological formation concerning indigenous subject as “extinct” and the mestizo as the dominant Mexican identity. Although Batalla also idealizes the indígena in his work, both ideological constructions have undoubtedly shaped early Chican@ identity

formation in the U.S. and will therefore be important in examining present Chican@ artivista ideology and methods. Finally, the work of Thomas Lemke and Wendy Larner will also be important analytic tools in pointing out the ways in which the neoliberal subject, self-discipline and governmentality play a part in the social relations of music.23

The goal in this chapter then is to lay the groundwork and map both the autoethnographic experience (my childhood and professional experience in music), which led me to this realization and to link and theorize the role that hope plays in the possibility of imagining otherwise. By theorizing and recounting these personal and community practices, I hope to begin to show how capital markets have been instrumental in the most intimate arrangements of music and art practice. In contrast, in later chapters I will demonstrate how art, music and culture are used by Chican@ artivistas as a way of engaging community dialogue to disrupt these arrangements.

Chican@ artivista use of art and creative expression as tools of dialogue with translocal communities give way to local and global constituent investment in hope that intrinsically incite new imaginaries. To this end, an examination of hope in this chapter will also be imperative to my project as I understand this practice to be an important source of empowerment in Chican@ artivista praxis. Intellectualizing hope will be relevant to the multiple arguments advocating for Chican@ artivista use of music and art as community building and, as such, a powerful and transformative tool for social justice.

Chapter two entitled “Chican@ Artivistas: Capital Markets and Resistance to Mind/Body Split” examines the early scholarship that first made me question our society’s relationship to music. I add the consideration of political economy, to the arguments which Blacking poses, as the reasons behind our Western way of interacting with music. In addition, I will revisit embodied music experience via my introduction into the community of Chican@ artivistas through my participation with the East L.A.-based Chicano rock band Quetzal.

Useful to this chapter is the diverse scholarship that examines imperial tools stemming from colonization, specifically, the tools of torture and terror during slavery

and how these techniques continue to thrive and shape our perceptions. As black feminist scholars Bibi Bakare-Yusuf and bell hooks argue, colonization conceived and thrived on the extraction of capital from black bodies and “the flesh.” I argue that although Chican@s do not have a history rooted in American slavery, the economic venture to extract labor from bodies is a multi-sited practice. Early colonial cultures in the Americas and elsewhere also used the tools of torture and terror to shape race and a gendered mindset and perceptions for social and political control. 

As previously mentioned, it is important in the work of U.S Third World feminists and by extension a Chicana feminist analysis to trace material practices in colonial history, in order to understand the positivist legacy of mind/body split that will allow us to better deconstruct the body ideology that gives currency to systemic structures. By understanding the systemic logic we can better understand the social relations of music. In so doing, I will also engage the literature on colonialism, and post-colonial and feminist development theory in order to understand — through the lens of other disciplines — how social and cultural tools have been used for the consolidation of nation-state, social, and ideological power.

Feminist development literature has been a useful tool in understanding the social relations of any given society, from the most intimate to the systemic. Development schemes and practices had historically implemented programs that failed to adapt to the specificity of a country or people. One of the most important interventions in the field of development studies is Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought (1994) by Naila Kabeer. Kabeer maps a history and intellectual discourse concerning women in development. Most useful was Kabeer’s urging of a “structuralist perspective” in development approaches.

A structuralist perspective to development practices urges a social relations analysis that extends an interconnected understanding of a subject’s position in society; rather than an analysis strictly on “women” or “men” as isolated categories, one must also look at the interconnecting relationships that includes other social identities, such as

class, race, and sexuality, which have a bearing on lived-experience. Social relations as Kabeer articulates are important to a complete understanding of the “concrete conditions” in both women and men’s lives.\textsuperscript{26} Importantly Kabeer identifies social institutions as the key components in the naturalization of varying gender roles and hierarchies across the world. Kabeer identifies social institutions as markets, states, religion, and kinship/family, concluding that these social institutions intersect and inform societies to affect varying subjects, particularly women. They lead to the organization of social and political life by “creating and regulating ideologies,” which lead to specific social practices that have concrete effects.\textsuperscript{27} In relation to gender, social institutions can inform the extent of one’s access, mobility and opportunities in society.

Conceiving of capital markets as social institutions gives currency to my study. Based on Kabeer’s theories, capital markets as social institutions have arranged the way we think, interact and therefore engage with music. Participatory music and dance practices are rare in capitalist societies. The social relations of music in this sense have been altered by capitalism market practices where music is primarily conceived as a commodity. The literature on popular culture, music and ethnomusicology will also support my discussion on the social relations of music. Building on the work of ethnomusicologist and music theorists, such as John Blacking, Christopher Small, Thomas-Turino, Marisol Berrios-Miranda, Susan McClary and Shannon-Dudley, I will demonstrate how other disciplines have made similar claims regarding the social relations of music.

**Artivistas**

Importantly chapter two demonstrates the personal and community moments — via communal and individual art practices — that strengthened Chican@ artivista political work. The goal for this chapter is to articulate the following: (1) the early 1990’s scene in East L.A. and the rise of the use of the term artivista, and (2) to narrate and theorize the important events that instigated communal dialogue among the artists within the community.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 65.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 49.
A historiography of early Chicana@ artistic movements of 1990’s is useful for mapping out the trajectory of East L.A. social movement through art, poetry, teatro, and music. My analysis on East L.A. art and culture builds on Chicana feminist works such as Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture (2005) by Michelle Habell-Pallan, and Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Alterities (2007) by Laura E. Pérez as well as an important anthology titled, ASCO: Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective (2011) to further contextualize the present Chican@ art communities in L.A. and in relation to previous generations. Additionally, the work of Steven Loza in Barrio Rhythms: Mexican American Music in Los Angeles (1993) will be important to my study.

American Studies scholar Victor Hugo Viesca offers the most recent and concise description of the Eastside music and culture scene in his journal article titled; The Battle of Los Angeles: The Cultural Politics of Chicana/o Music in the Greater Eastside (2004). Focusing mostly on the music networks, Viesca gives a thorough historical and socio-political groundwork that sets off the grassroots movement and the “counter politics” embedded in the music. As Viesca recounts, “the Eastside scene is a product of and means for countering the impact of globalization on low-wage workers and aggrieved racialized populations.” Although he does not use the term Chican@ artivistas in his article, he nonetheless repeatedly highlights how music, both in content and production, is a tool in the struggle for transformation and social justice. He also makes reference to the ways in which the music is also a relational tool amongst the groups in the scene, and highlights the ways in which resources are shared.

Most relevant to this chapter is the Zapatista Uprising and the impact that the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (E.Z.L.N) had on East L.A. artivistas. Most useful will be an analysis of the role of indigenous pedagogy as it was being articulated by the Zapatistas, on the East-Los methods, and epistemologies that laid the groundwork for visions that shaped and continue to inspire projects.

Chapter three is titled “The BFZ and Art as a Tool.” It is a recount of the Primer Encuentro Entre Chicanas y Chicanos e Indígenas Para La Humanidad y Contra el Neoliberalismo (The First Encounter between Chicanas and Chicanos and Indigenous People for Humanity and Against Neo-liberalism (1997). As discussed in chapter two, the Zapatistas invigorated the Chican@ East L.A. artistic movement. By examining this important encounter between 70 East Los Artivistas (as we called ourselves) and the Indigenous Zapatista Mayan community of Oventic, I will demonstrate (1) how music and/or art served as dialectic tools and (2) how the process of collective communal engagement drew out multiple subjectivities between Chican@ and Mayan participants. Through communal artistic processes these different subjectivities, although existing in multiple and intersectional ways in our daily lives, were highlighted and deconstructed in the process. Most importantly as a result the experiences in the 1997 Encuentro, Chican@ artivistas began to generate collective and creative work utilizing the social techniques learned in translocal conversation with Mayan communities.

At present, Chican@ artivista social and community engagement repertoire includes, but is not limited to: artistic encuentros, collective poetry and songwriting workshops, participatory music and dance practices, teatro performances, video presentations, music concerts, and public events on health and alternative economies. What will be important to note is that despite their varied approaches Chican@ artivistas all seek to ignite communal critical consciousness, which I believe is due to the experiences gathered from the 1997 Encuentro.

An examination of the literature in performance studies will be important to this chapter, particularly the work of performance theorist Diana Taylor. In Archive and the Repertoire (2003), Taylor beckons a reorientation of the ways social memory and cultural identity in the Americas have traditionally been studied. In her view, writing has come to stand in, for, and against embodiment.30 Taylor warns of the emphasis on literary and historical documents. As she points out, a great deal of significance and insight into stories, struggles, and memories can reside in performance practice. She states, “embodied expression has participated and will probably continue to participate in the

transmission of social knowledge, memory, and identity pre and postwriting.”31 Taylor continues, “It is difficult to think about embodied practice within the epistemic systems developed in Western thought, where writing has become the guarantor of existence itself.”32

In keeping with the community building methods that were generated at the 1997 Encuentro, Chapter four titled, “Fandango as a De-colonial Tool,” is an exploration of the translocal dialogues and community networks that developed out of fandango (participatory music and dance practice of Veracruz, Mexico) praxis. Importantly, this chapter tracks the liberatory exercise fandango has been in various communities in Veracruz, Mexico, California and Seattle Washington. A brief historical background of the fandango will give meaning to the importance of the resurgence of this practice in Mexican communities and how the informal dialogue (fandango sin fronteras) is tied to the fandango movement in the U.S.

I observe this important translocal movement — fandango sin fronteras — of participatory music and dance practice as a reflection of indigenous pedagogies that stem from Zapatista urgings of community building through encuentros. For this reason, I will return to Diana Taylor’s emphasis on the importance of performance as knowledge as it is useful to demonstrate the ways in which Chicana@ artivistas have grasped the importance of participatory music and dance practices in fandango as a community building practice.33

Although fandango can be regarded as an ephemeral practice, it nonetheless adheres to the politics of space and identity in Chican@ Eastlos34 life, where disenfranchisement and globalization has had an effect on local economies and social services. Space is scarce, land becomes “extinct,” and thus it becomes one of the many issues of power to contend with when attempting to build community.35 Chican@ artivistas have come to understand that fandango is a phenomenon that can manifest and

31 Ibid., 10.
32 Ibid., 3.
33 Fandango is a participatory music and dance practice native to the state of Veracruz, Mexico.
34 “EastLos” is short for East Los Angeles. I will use both interchangeably.
disappear. However, even with its ephemeral quality, fandango nonetheless instills in participants the sociality of community. In this sense, Chican@ artivistas and/or fandangueros are always “in situ: intelligible in the framework of the immediate environment and issues surrounding them.”36 Fandango then becomes the perfect tool that “imagineers” (imagines/engineers) a community that can adapt to the volatile issues of space in Eastlos life.37

As Taylor informs us, the hemispheric lens “stretches the spatial and temporal framework” of performance to interconnect what may seem like “separate geographical and political areas.” 38 Taylor’s “hemispheric perspective”39 adheres to Chican@ artivistas translocal dialogues with both Mayan communities in Chiapas and Jarocho40 communities in Veracruz. In this sense, embodied practices, like fandango, are “an episteme and a praxis, a way of knowing as well as a way of storing and transmitting cultural knowledge and identity, that is not adherent to political or nation-state boundaries.”41 Similar to Taylor’s emphasis on hemispheric lens, Lynn Stephen’s use of transborder will be useful to tease out the resistance embedded in the political power of fandango in relation to the nation-state.

Chapter five titled, “Los Guardianes de La Convivencia” (or the Guardians of Conviviality), is both an exploration of the Entre Mujeres: Translocal Feminine Composition project initiated in Veracruz Mexico from the fall of 2008 to June of 2009, and an account of the origins and rise of The Seattle Fandango Project (SFP), which is currently one of the most productive fandango communities in the Pacific Northwest. Through both of these accounts I seek to demonstrate how Chicana artivista praxis touches down in real time in communities. Both examples make visible how artivista praxis, via the translocal dialogue and experience, has been implemented in real

39 Ibid.
40 Jarocho is the music and culture of the southern part of the state of Veracruz, México. Its roots are indigenous, Spanish, and African.
communities to produce a substantial body of work that is collective, liberatory, and most importantly self-sustainable.

The *Entre Mujeres* project made visible the ways in which recording traditions exclude women from recording and music composition participation by the way in which recording facilities are situated and implemented. I will demonstrate how low-cost portable recording equipment such as Digi-O1 Pro-tools facilitates transnational musical dialogues between U.S.-based Chican@es in Los Angeles and *Jarocho* musicians in Veracruz, Mexico. The *Entre Mujeres* project fostered a new way of recording engagement that actively took women and their multiple responsibilities into consideration. Ultimately, new recording technologies as they are utilized by women across borders compel us to re-think the “who, what, and where” of musical production, specifically what pedagogical shifts occur when one re-contextualizes the sound booth with kitchens?

Furthermore, this chapter will engage in a theoretical analysis on the collective songwriting process. Drawing mostly from the *Entre Mujeres Project: Transnational Feminine Composition* (2007-08)\(^{42}\), I primarily concern myself with an analysis of the socio-political dynamics of the songwriting process. Although I had previously experienced this process in the *1997 Encuentro*, it was during the *Entre Mujeres* project that I came to find that *convivencia, testimonio*, trust, healing, and knowledge production are the principle epistemologies in the practice.

Through the *1997 Encuentro* and the *Entre Mujeres Project*, I have witnessed time and again how the collective songwriting method as a process creates space, builds community, challenges multiple patriarchal systems, and can potentially produce knowledge that is accessible beyond the academy. I believe that eventually *songs as texts*, or what I have termed as *sung theories*, will be accessible archives that can communicate important embodied knowledge theory across time, disciplines, borders, generations and other ways of knowing.

\(^{42}\) *Entre Mujeres* was funded by the Fulbright García-Robles grant from Sept. 2008 to June 2009. The original intention was to engage in a musical dialogue with the women involved in the *son jarocho* movement or *El Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero* (The New Jaranero Movement).
The Conclusion entitled “Imaginaries”: The Grammy and The Graduate Student” begins with a lyrical analysis of the title track of Quetzal’s Grammy Award winning album “Imaginaries” (2011). The goal of the conclusion is to consolidate the various methodologies that I have demonstrated throughout the dissertation, and how the lyrics of “Imaginaries” demonstrate the processes I have indicated throughout the dissertation.

In accordance with black educator/activist Joy James,

“Action promotes consciousness of one’s own political practice....It is usually the greatest and most difficult learning experience, particularly if it is connected to communities and issues broader than the parameters of academic life.”

I demonstrate how Chican@ artivista praxis challenges ideas of space, community building, knowledge production and mentorship, and how Chican@ artivistas have been rooted and contingent on relationality and learning as community.

To this end, it is important to recount some of the challenges within the community of Chican@ artivistas and the new generation that begin to form their own ideas and visions for the future. The younger generation of Chican@ artivistas, who have taken up some of the social techniques as a way of building community, and have constructed new ones as well. In this sense, this chapter is an epilogue to the activities and ways in which Chican@ artivista momentum continues to thrive, but how the varying social techniques are being challenged, distorted or improved by a younger generation.

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43 Quetzal’s “Imaginaries” was released in September of 2011 on the Smithsonian Folkways Label. The album title was in part, inspired by Emma Perez’s The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas Into History (1999).

CHAPTER ONE

“La Cruz de Olvido\textsuperscript{45}” or “The Burden of Loss”

I rummaged through an old cardboard box of pictures and found my father’s red 1970’s scrapbook. It is wire-bound with brown sticky surfaces and each page is covered by yellowed cellophane. Some of the pictures have been eaten up by the acidity, and time spent abandoned in boxes amid dozens of moves. I know it is an important piece of my history and so I have kept it.

I really don’t know how I ended up with it. My older brother, Gabriel, is in most of these pictures. My father used to save just about everything that had my brother’s name on it. Newspaper clippings, promo film shots, Polaroid pictures, concert flyers, and tickets. My father saved all of these mementos proudly. He numbered the pages at the bottom, and labeled some of the photographs. I faintly remember how he would setup everything on the kitchen table and spend hours putting these albums together. These

\textsuperscript{45} “La Cruz de Olvido” is an old ranchera song written by David Zaizar. It is relevant to the title of this chapter as it was one of the first songs my great grandmother and father taught us. In the spirit of Chican@ activism praxis most of my dissertation chapter will be titled after one of my compositions or another song relevant to the chapter content. A CD with the compositions will also be provided.
pictures and mementos now remind me of his sadness and discontent. The scrapbook is a material trace of what he never got to live for himself, but rather vicariously through his first-born.

My father longed to be a professional singer. His dreams of living a life of music, according to his historical moment and genre of choice, meant becoming a famous Mexican crooner like Javier Solís. However, he saw the death of his dreams with the birth of his family. Left in the wake of fatherhood and the pressures of immigrant life in the U.S., he became increasingly depressed. In his dream life, his professional music life, there were no *chamacos mocosos*\(^{46}\) running about, no early bedtimes, sick children, or a wife to tend to. In “the life,” there was no time for family.

As his responsibilities grew, he continued to strive for his professional music life as he entered singing contests in hopes of being “discovered.” I remember we once listened to him on KWKW Radio 13 in Los Angeles when they used to broadcast from the now historic El Mercadito on First Street. I remember my mother telling us to be quiet as she searched for the station. My father was going to be on the radio! We all leaned in to listen to the program and waited patiently for his name to come up. The announcer finally introduced my father and as the mariachi kicked in we held our breaths. We had heard him sing plenty of times in the living room and knew he had something special. However, when he began to sing you could hear his voice quiver. He had a wonderful deep Javier Solis-like voice. “*Era su viejo,*” as he would say, and he could imitate him closely.

He finished the song and the announcer interviewed him. Again, you could hear the fear in his quivering voice as he answered the questions with great eloquence. My father had watched and learned the great etiquette and elegance by which all the artists of his time would communicate. *La época de oro,* or the golden age of Mexican cinema, still resonated in the hearts and minds of Mexican popular culture and my father prided himself on being a “*profesional.*”\(^{47}\) He was meticulous both about his dress and presentation, as well as his speech in addressing an audience.

\(^{46}\) Runny-nose children.
\(^{47}\) Professional.
My father received second place on this day and we made him a congratulations sign as we waited for him to come home. As he walked through the door and we ran to hug him, he fought back tears. It’s hard to say what he got choked up about. I think we all felt sad, for we knew how much it meant to him. I think that, even back then, I knew we were “in the way” and that he was not happy with us. We were just not enough. Nothing could take the place of music. My father held on for a while before he spun into his deepest, darkest moments.

My Father’s Dreams

My father was born Carlos Xavier González in 1946, Guadalajara, Mexico. He immigrated to the U.S in 1968. He followed his mother who had immigrated some years earlier. He was about 16 or 17 years old and attended Belmont High School in Los Angeles for a year or two but never graduated. He met my mother in downtown L.A. at the Alexandria ballroom. Downtown L.A was a thriving site for immigrant youth at the time. My mother recalls that my father asked to dance with her and never left her side. Like many marriages, theirs was a “shotgun” wedding. When my mother found out she was pregnant, they went back to Guadalajara, got married and returned to L.A to have my brother. Soon thereafter, I came along and then two other sisters.

When he wasn’t working, my father’s life revolved around music. He loved to listen to it. He loved to sing. He loved to talk about music. He owned a shiny black wall piano and a guitar, both of which he did not know how to play. He used to lay open partituras or sheet music on the piano as if he or someone in the house had just played. I think the very presence of these instruments made him feel close to music, and he strongly believed that at some point in his life he would take the time to learn.

My mother was also creative. She had a wonderful voice and was a great Mambo dancer. She instilled music in us by way of lullabies. The lullabies of Gavelindo Soler (Cri-Cri), or Libertad Lamarque were a constant in our home. Lullabies accompanied by hand gestures and dances were the most memorable and peaceful times for me.

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48 As noted in Patricia Zavella’s work in Neither Here Nor There: Mexican’s Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty (2011), the Immigration Act of 1965 allowed 20,000 immigrants and “immediate relatives” (31) into the U.S. My father migrated at this time with my grandmother’s assistance. My grandmother (father’s mother) had migrated earlier to work as a domestic.
One weekend there was a carnival at a public park. My father decided to enter Gabriel into a singing contest. As my brother finished singing “El Rey” by José Alfredo Jiménez, he was showered with coins. Quarters, dimes, and nickels were thrown on stage as my brother smiled and looked over at my father who urged him to bow and pick up the money. He won first place and a trophy that day! In an instant, my father redirected his dreams of being a professional musician toward my brother.

Fernando Hernandez and My Brother’s Career

Fernando Hernández and my brother Gabriel on tour somewhere in Mexico circa 1979 (Private Collection).

Fernando Hernández was my tío or uncle by marriage. A Mexican music promoter and booking agent in Los Angeles, my Tío was a flashy confident man who loved to hang out with Mexican artists who made their way through California on Variedades or variety shows.49 Touring in Variedades was a good way for singers to share travel and food expenses. Multiple artists would tour together with one mariachi that would accompany them all. Singers such as a young Vicente Fernández, Lucha Villa, Aída Cuevas, Mercedes Castro, and Juan Gabriel, were some of the most notable figures that came through this circuit. My Tío would promote the events as well as host the artists when they were in town, showering them with drink and meals in his home.

My Tío, a hyper-masculine figure, loved to flaunt his money. He would carry wads of cash and was always cracking jokes. A flashy dresser, he would wear ironed

49 I have previously written about the lucrative Variedades circuit in “Zapateado Chicana Afro-Jarocho Fandango Style: Self Reflective Moments in Performance” (2009).
shirts with gold chains exposed on a hairy chest. My Tío had taken interest in my brother after hearing him sing at a family party. To my mother’s reluctance, my father agreed to have my uncle jumpstart his career. My Tío Fernando soon ushered him into contests and singing engagements all over California. It was then that my brother began to participate in the variedades.\textsuperscript{50}

**El Million Dollar Theatre**

After some rigorous coaching by my father, Gabriel was soon on bills with some of the most respected Mexican artist of the times. The Variedades would often stop off at the historic Million Dollar Theater in downtown L.A. My sister Claudia and I were later encouraged to join my brother by singing harmonies or segunda. Our act became known as *Gabrielito González, La Actuación Infantil*, the ‘Children’s Act’. Lucha Villa, Mercedes Castro, Aida Cuevas, Vicente Fernández, Federico Villa, and Yolanda Del Rió, to name a few, were artists that we had the privilege of opening up for over the years.

I still remember exploring the Million Dollar Theatre in downtown L.A., running on sticky floors through back stage wings, and dodging ratttaps. The smell of stale popcorn and nachos lingered in the air as we listened to the mariachis warm up in the basement. The house Mariachi at the Million Dollar Theatre was *Mariachi América de Miguel Márquez* and, in my brother’s best interest, my father would bring them mariachis a bottle of tequila to rehearsals. My father believed that the Mariachi would put more ganas or effort into the music if you brought them a gift. The bottle of tequila was a gesture of appreciation and encouraged them to play well for your set of songs.

*Gabrielito González was soon known as “La Sensación Infantil, Con El Auténtico Sentimiento Mexicano.”*\textsuperscript{51} His place of birth was concealed at first since he was born in Los Angeles. The record company that signed him felt that his birthplace would turn off Mexican patrons that were ranchera fans. With no child labor protection acts in México and my father’s drunken permission, my brother worked him non-stop from the time he was nine to eleven years old, frequently missing school, traveling, doing late night gigs,

\textsuperscript{50} As Michelle Habell-Pallán articulates in *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture* (2005) we were part of a long performance history in Downtown L.A. on Broadway.

\textsuperscript{51} *Gabrielito González* with the authentic Mexican sentiment, was the title of my brother’s debut album on El Rey discos (1978).
and filming. Despite my mother’s protest, my father’s word was always final. Although she worried tremendously about my brother, she would mostly deal with her daughters, combing our hair, applying makeup and making our skirts for our performances.

It is saddening to think of these times, for although these experiences were rich in music and culture, I knew that my family was falling apart. My father’s drinking worsened and he became extremely abusive to all of us. After many years of a turbulent home life, losing a home, and living in and out of our relative’s garages and trailers, my mother finally left him when I was 11 years old. After their divorce, my father tried to keep in touch with us, but soon lost his battle to alcoholism and one day disappeared into the streets of East Los Angeles. It was up to my mother to raise four children alone.

“El Artista” Vagabundo

Once my father ceased to live in our home, he would occasionally come back to see us. During some of his visits, he would show up intoxicated and dirty. Sometimes he would disappear for long periods of time. The excessive alcohol use had made him delusional, and he would rant and tell us about some big plans he had with some famous Mexican composer. When too much time went by without hearing a word, my brother would take to the streets to look for him. My father’s transient name was “el artista” or the artist. Using his street name, my brother would eventually track him down with the help of other transients. In this way we knew that our father “el artista” was still alive. These were especially difficult times as we saw his health and appearance deteriorate with each meeting. Despite his situation, his missing teeth and dirty clothes, I believe my father never abandoned the idea that he would one day “make it” in music.

In retrospect, I remember he always longed for music in an unhealthy way. Some of my first childhood memories of my father are of him sitting on the floor, intoxicated, gazing at the record player and conducting to imaginary musicians and singers. Sometimes he would force us to learn classic Mexican rancheras or baladas such as “La Cruz de Olvido.” This old ranchera ballad tells of a sad parting on a ship for the forgotten. My father enjoyed hearing us sing it. Maybe he predicted his parting both mentally and

52 The artist-vagabond.
physically from this world. What I am certain of is that he never found a way to conceive of a life in music outside of commercial success.

I believe that my father preferred to live in a state of illusion towards the end of his life. And, in his own way he began a process of saying good-bye. “La Cruz de Olvido” lyrics read:

Con el atardecer, me iré de aquí.
Me iré sin ti.
Me alejaré de ti con un dolor dentro de mi.
Te juro corazón que no es falta de amor pero es mejor así.
Un día comprenderás, que lo hice por tu bien.
Que todo fue por ti.

Te juro Corazón, que no es falta de amor.
Pero es mejor así.
Un día comprenderás, que lo hice por tu bien.
Que todo fue por ti.

La Barca en que me iré. Lleva una cruz de Olvido.
Lleva una cruz de amor. Y en esa cruz sin ti, me moriré de hastío.

With the dawn, I will leave this place.
I will leave without you.
I will leave you with great sorrow in me.
I swear my heart that it is not for lack of love, but surely it is better this way.
One day you will understand, that I have done this for your own good.
That it was all for you.

Although my father was absent for the rest of my life, I inherited most of my musical interest from him. Even after he disappeared for good, his ideologies, belief systems and teachings continued to both influence and haunt me.

Analysis

“Our thinking has now been over determined by commoditization.”

—Priti Ramamurthy

When I reflect on capital markets arrangement of the social relations of music, I can better understand my father’s inner struggles and the value system he so adamantly

upheld. As Ramamurthy states, capitalist logic dictates much of what we live. The very nature of how we tend to function in U.S. society revolves around economic capital and commodities. My father, like many, also viewed music life in this way. To be discovered by an agent or manager, obtaining a record contract, and then living a life of a professional musician is the “natural” progression of Western societies’ current understanding of music. The power and love of music is oftentimes inextricably infused with ideas of professionalization, upward mobility, and status that intrinsically come with respect. The power and prestige of being a “professional singer” was the only way my father could visualize participation and interaction with music.

Ironically, my father’s ideas of music were also infused with being humble and a worker of the people. For example, he loved to speak of Javier Solis’ career. In admiration of Solis’ humble beginnings, my father would remind us that Solis had once been a mechanic’s apprentice, a panadero or baker, a butcher, and even an amateur boxer. This was his way of telling us that anyone could be in Solis’ shoes, anyone with talent and dedication. Lectures on the importance of “el publico” or the public were a constant in our home, as he stated over and over again, “El publico manda!”

Thinking back at all of these moments prompts the following questions: why was my father’s desire to be a “professional musician” so strong? Why did he suffer at the thought of not having music in this particular way? Had he experienced or conceived of other ways to have music in his life?55

Capital Market as a Social Institution

A social groundwork has to be sowed and cultivated for any kind of logic to be adopted by society. There are countless writings that stipulate the ways in which European empires established a social “logic” via the tools of race, class, and sexuality for social and political control.56 Feminist development theory has been useful in unpacking the complicity of nations, states, family and other social institutions as

54 I make the distinction here between the avid listener and those that want to take up a bigger role in music.
55 I don’t assume that my father not being able to live a life of a professional musician was what turned him into a transient alcoholic. I use my father as an example of what I believe is a common social ideology concerning music.
important factors in securing market capitalism’s arrangement of social constructs and behaviors.

Feminist development theorist Naila Kabeer, for example, has been instrumental in the field of development for her contribution to an understanding of gender and the discourses on the inclusion of women in development practices. Ultimately, Kabeer’s contributions have helped us see how the most intimate aspects of life have been arranged according to market capitalism. In this sense, globalization and neoliberalism can also be seen as social forces, and not strictly economic ones. Regardless of the terms we use to signify capital economic order on a global or local scale, feminist development theorists refuse to uproot economic logic from its social underpinnings. To this end, a discussion on the work of economists Wendy Larner (2003) and Thomas Lemke (2000) anchors my discussion on governmentality and economic systems as social forces.

Wendy Larner has examined the popularity of “neoliberalism” and the ways in which the term is articulated by scholars in varied disciplines. Larner contends that neoliberalism has “usurped” globalization as the term used to describe contemporary forms of global economic restructuring. “Although neoliberalism may have a clear intellectual genesis, it arrives in different places in different ways, articulates with other political projects, takes multiple forms, and can give rise to unexpected outcomes.” Neoliberalism as the successor term for globalization “operates at multiple scales.” That is, “not only is it a supranational project (neoliberal-globalization), it involves nation-state and local (particularly urban) political projects.” Despite the “geographical and scalar diversity,” little attention is being paid to the “different variants” of neoliberalism, to the “hybrid nature of contemporary policies and programs,” and to “the multiple and contradictory aspects of neoliberal spaces, techniques and subjects.” Larner encourages us to gain the details and complexities of the processes involved. Most significantly, she urges us to look at the literature on governmentality to examine the ways in which “spaces, states, and subjects are constituted in particular forms through

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59 Ibid., 510.
60 Ibid., 511.
61 Ibid., 509.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid. 509.
both state and non-state processes.” Larner hopes that through this approach we are able to “arrive into new domains” of analysis — that of bodies, households, families, sexualities, and communities, and as I see it, the social relations of music.

In similar ways, Thomas Lemke expands our understanding of neoliberalism and the way that space, states, and subjects are constituted in particular forms, principally through self-discipline. Lemke’s articulation of the genealogy of governmentality borrows from Michel Foucault, who defines government as conduct or “the conduct of conduct.” It is important to understand the ways in which the term governmentality makes visible the “governing of others” but most importantly a “governing of the self.”

“Governing of the self” or technologies of the self resonate with me in my attempt to understand my father’s desires concerning music in his life. Upon analyzing how capitalism has arranged individual subjects’ interaction and relationship to music and by extension each other, I can come to a better understanding of my father’s perceptions concerning music. Furthermore, I cannot dismiss self-discipline as part and parcel to the social domination of capital markets arrangement of the social relations of music and communities. Lemke states:

“I think that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, he has to take into account not only techniques of general domination but also techniques of the self.”

Indeed, my father disciplined himself, his household and children to identify and seek music through the professionalization of it.

Lemke unpacks Foucault’s work and his emphasis on the nuances of power and the ways in which power as a “strategic game” constitutes itself through various means. Lemke makes visible the “versatile equilibrium” of power with its complicities and conflicts, coercions and processes and the ways in which we construct ourselves in the process. Such is the case with my father’s love for Javier Solís. Meritocracy thrived in his mind’s eye, and he convinced himself that if he worked hard enough, he might also be a

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67 M. Foucault as qtd by T. Lemke. “Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique,” 2.
68 S. Lemke. “Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique,” 2.
professional singer someday. My father was a fan of Solís’ voice, but also identified with his humble beginnings.

It is no wonder then, how the social relations of music at present is more aptly understood as a commodity rather than a participatory practice. For music to be understood as a commodity in the liberal neo-classical sense, it has had to go through a process of construction. Through Lemke, Larner and Foucault, we can see how practices don’t exist without a certain regime of rationality.”

La Época de Oro del Cine Mexicano: Modernity and Professionalization as tools of Self-Discipline

“There is a circumstantial pride in a past that is somehow assumed to be glorious, but that is experienced as something dead, a matter for specialists and an irresistible attraction for tourists. Above all, it is assumed to be something apart from ourselves, something that happened long ago in the same place where we, the Mexicans live today.”

—Bonfil Batalla

Considering the theoretical models of the neoliberal subject, self-discipline and governmentality, I can see how my father was a product of his time. Although I do not overlook that my father had choices, it is important to consider his social formation and how the historical period in which he grew up had an impact on his value system as an adult. My father grew up at the height of La Época de Oro del Cine Mexicano (or the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema) in Mexico. La Época de Oro in many respects was a key tool in the creation and maintenance of modern Mexican identity through the medium of film. Ranging from 1939 to 1969, the films of this golden era often portrayed varying topics concerning Mexican life and/or the history of Mexico through tales of valor, love and war. Directors such as Fernando de Fuentes and Emilio Fernandez were key directors during this important and prosperous time for Mexican cinema and the

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69 I am not assuming that musicians or music workers weren’t hired or hadn’t been in the past by their respective communities, but rather want to bring into focus the ways in which the capital market, production, distribution consumption model is fundamentally different then the community musician playing for their respective community.
72 Nation building is usually tied-up in masculinist discourse as well. In future chapters I will discuss how the professionalization of music and masculinity are intertwined in the Mexican nation-building project post-Revolution of 1910.
arts in general. These films romanticized a Mexican past— that was typically diminished through its representation of indigenous ways and people as historically significant yet “extinct” in order to be able to justify the modernist project.

As Mexican social scientist Bonfil Batalla articulates in Mexico Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization (1996), the romanticizing of a “Mexican past” usually involved a construction of the indigenous subject as extinct. Citing intellectuals from Vasconcelos, to the first professional Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio, Bonfil Batalla demonstrates the social, political, and ideological groundwork that has taken place from early conquest to the present to describe the ways in which those in power have dealt with the “Indian problem” in Mexico.

In Bonfil Batalla’s insightful book, he offers a series of successful arguments that lead to the conclusion that Mexican society is composed of a plurality of cultures that have never been taken into account by any government rule since the conquest. He articulates two ideological forces – “Mexico profundo” and the “imaginary Mexico.” The “Mexico profundo” is characterized by Bonfil Batalla as the Meso-American civilization, while the “imaginary Mexico” is the political force that has held power to this day. Batalla illustrates through the “imaginary Mexico” its denial of “the cultural reality” lived by most Mexicans through its exclusionary national and international policies. To this end, Batalla suggests that, “certain social groups have illegitimately held political, economic, and ideological power from the European invasion to the present.”

**Film, Modernity and Mexico**

The ideology of the indio as extinct was being articulated through various mediums. Mexican film theorist Andrea Noble notes the importance of filmmakers in post-revolution Mexico, specifically the work of Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, that catapulted many more to follow in his footsteps. Eisenstein is most notably known for his work in “Que Viva México! Que Viva México!” This film was not finished in Eisenstein’s lifetime, but it nonetheless imparted an ideology and techniques of visual representation, most notably the montage, which changed the face of cinematography.

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74 Ibid., 61.
The cultural renaissance of the Mexican post-revolutionary period attracted various artists and intellectuals. As Noble states, “Eisenstein enjoyed the support and friendship of some of the country’s leading artists and intellectuals of the time, including Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Adolfo Best Maugard, Jean Charlot, and Gabriel Fernández Ledesma...” to name a few. However, Eisenstein’s film, “¡Que Viva México!” left an enduring yet controversial legacy. “¡Que Viva México!” is a documentary-style narrative organized into four novellas — “Sandunga,” “Fiesta,” “Maguey,” and “Soldadera” — as well as an epilogue devoted to the Day of the Dead. Eisenstein’s visual treatment of indigenous subjects, landscapes and daily living through the montage has been seen by some as a voyeuristic look at the other. Through “¡Que Viva México!” came the birth of “Eisensteinian excesses,” which although exalted in its time have since been critiqued for its essentialism. Noble cites 1940’s film work of the time and how the:

“...films fed eagerly into the enticement of exoticism, and the cinematography...influenced by the Eisensteinian excesses of “¡Que Viva México!” was replete with women wrapped in rebozos (traditional shawls), alongside stoic campesinos (peasants) who appear to rise out of the maguey cactus below and descend from the billowing clouds above.”

Noble reminds us that Eisenstein’s visual representation of indigenous people and their culture, however unsettling, was in accordance with the indigenista discourse of its time. Rather, “as an avant-garde auteur of international standing,” his vision “converged conveniently” with official government policy. As Noble elaborates:

“The paradox turns on the fact that while indigenismo emerged from the Revolution as a crucial and nation-defining cultural concept, the Revolution itself was not fought in the name of race. Instead the conflict was couched in terms of class.”

Indigenismo was, therefore, as it had been in the preceding centuries, an “elite discourse deployed in the name of a nation-state struggling to consolidate and legitimate its

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76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 178.
79 Ibid., 177.
identity.” To date, “Eisenstein is frequently invoked as an enduring influence — for better or for worse — on Mexican visual culture more generally.”

Popular culture or art supported by the Mexican government between 1920 and 1940 had a nationalistic character that centered on indigenous artifacts, ways of life and dress. As a social construction, the mestizo was needed to bring order to the chaos brought about by the Mexican revolution of 1910. For all intents and purposes, it was an imagined identity in relation to the reality and true plural nature of the country. That is, despite the reality that Mexico has a multitude of indigenous populations and cultures in its territory, the indigenous subject was conceived as “extinct” in nation-state narratives. The construction of the mestizo served as a way to consolidate power and gather the public’s imagination under one identity. This was an easier task than to assess the material reality and existing indigenous populations within Mexico. Nonetheless, Batalla articulates that, “The revolution of 1910 has accorded to the image of the Indian a special privilege, that of serving as one of the major, official symbols of nationalism”  Batalla affirms it has been an “ideological exaltation of the Indian, which has made his presence visible in the public sphere under State control” (my emphasis). Furthermore, “In music, dance, literature, and the plastic arts, the theme of the Indian provided the basic elements for shaping a vast nationalist current under government patronage.”

State powers take ideological control in a multitude of ways. Under capitalism, states construct commodities that are beneficial to their cause. The greatest commodity during the La Época de Oro was nostalgia. The emotional currency of the indio, or indian, was based on nostalgia, which intrinsically implied a “moving forward.” As Bonfil Batalla powerfully states:

“Through an adroit ideological alchemy, the past became our past, that of the Mexicans who are not Indians. However, it is an inert past, a simple reference to what existed as a kind of premonition of what Mexico is today and will be in the

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80 Ibid., 177.
81 Ibid., 175.
82 I am not arguing that the mestizo or mestizaje does not exist. Rather than the biological idea of mestizaje, I focus on the discourse of mestizaje was used by governments at different points in Mexican history. I seek to demonstrate how the term was an important tool created by the Mexican government to gather the public’s imagination, and thus political power in the years of the Porfiriato.
84 Ibid., 53.
85 Ibid., 53.
86 The indigenous subject was for the most part portrayed as loyal yet backward in his/her thinking.
future. It has no real connection with our contemporary reality and our collective future.”

Thus, film, music and cultural artifacts succeeded in articulating indigenismo as a commodity in order to assert a cultural mestizaje. In this way, the extraction of the indígenas image, artifacts and clothes is a form of disembodiment from its source — the people. The modernist project of indigenismo was a “lifting” of cultural artifacts while shedding the multitude of people, practices, belief systems and ways of life that gave birth to them.

La Época de Oro, therefore, was a powerful tool in maintaining Mexican rhetoric of the mestizo as the prime citizens of the Mexican nation, and all at once succeeded in communicating ideas of progress and modernity. The construction of Mexico as a homogenous society, particularly after the revolution, was attractive to markets, tourist and investors. As Noble states:

“In the final analysis, indigenismo was not really about incorporating a complex, pluralistic notion of the multiple indigenous ethnicities within national culture. The ultimate and paradoxical aim of official indigenismo in Mexico was thus to liberate the country from the deadweight of its native past or, to put the case more clearly, finally to destroy the native culture that had emerged during the colonial period. Indigenismo was therefore a means to an end. That end was cultural mestizaje.”

In Music

“A pesar de la variadísima gama de manifestaciones culturales regionales, tanto indígenas como mestizas, la tendencia cinematográfica del periodo consistió en la aplicación de estereotipos un tanto excesivos; el charro bravucón, bebedor, galante, violento, viril; el de la china poblana, sumisa, enamoradiza, guapa y obediente. Estos estereotipos vienen a reducir a una dimensión mas o menos gobernable o, si se prefiere, entendible, la diversidad Mexicana.”

“Despite the varied gamut of cultural and regional manifestations, as much indigenous as mestiza, the tendency of the cinemagraphic stereotypes of the times consisted in the application of the excessive portrayal of the: the angry charro, the drinker, the gallant, the violent, the virile man; also the china poblana, the submissive, the in love, the beautiful, and the obedient woman. These stereotypes live and they are reduced to one dimension that has somewhat governed or is a preferred understanding of the diversity of

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89 Charro is a term referring to a traditional horseman from Mexico.
Mexicaness.”

—Juan Pablo Silva Escobar

I suggest that La Época de Oro del Cine Mexicano succeeded in instilling the professionalization of the Mexican musician. The films and ideology imbedded in them were significant in defining my father’s conception of music. Stories of meritocracy and individual triumph fueled the ideological economy of the mestizo in films. As my father so violently argued, Javier Solís may have been born into poverty but could “make it” nonetheless.

The How and Why

These memories now lay silent on my lap. The dilapidated photo album reminds me of how I used to understand music. Like my father, I began to pursue a professional life in music. I joined groups whose goal was to acquire popular music stardom. For some projects, my brother, sister and I worked together like we always had. These were long days and nights of dealing with crooked managers and producers that exploited us. I left many projects for being sexually harassed. On other occasions, I was fired for not “dressing the part.” As a female singer, I was often expected to wear very little or show “more skin” during performances. There was a time when I hated ranchera music because it reminded me of my father. I could not listen to Javier Solís without feeling pain and fear. At some point, I retreated from music practice altogether.

When you grow up thinking that music only exists one way in society, where both social and commercial markets reinforce these ideas, it is difficult to break from or imagine other models on how music could function in the life of a lover of music. I would face many more challenges in music as a young woman before I had a change of heart. The change in perspective for me has been mostly in the how and why. Despite my father instilling his belief system in regards to music, fate and/or destiny had a different path for me.

Hope as Praxis

Noble makes an important point regarding the prism that Eisenstein saw Mexico through. Rather than conceive of his vision as “flawed” it was more or less “symptomatic
of the cultural milieu of the age in which he lived.”\(^{91}\) I contend that my father’s music conceptions, which can be directly related to Eisenstein’s visions as well as his compatriot filmmakers, was also a result of the “cultural milieu” of the age in which he lived in. When an ideology is being espoused through multiple cultural and social avenues there is an inevitable reduction of possibilities and other ways of being. This can be said for any country that is driving an ideological sentiment for nation-state control. In this way, I refer back to hope as that which can inspire new imaginings.

U.S Third World feminists have engaged in intellectual discussions on emotions such as hope, love, fear, anger and rage.\(^{92}\) Chela Sandoval identified love as that which helps in “breaking through” social, political or ideological controls in order to find “understanding and community.”\(^{93}\) Sandoval suggests that love as a hermeneutic, as a set of practices and procedures, “can transit all citizen-subjects, regardless of social class, toward a differential mode of consciousness and its accompanying technologies of method and social movement.”\(^{94}\) Sandoval relates love to other terms post-colonial scholars used to intellectualize emotions. Roland Barthes used the term “drifting,” for example, where he defined it as “a movement of meanings that will not be governed; it is the intractable itself as it permeates through, in, and outside of power.”\(^{95}\) Derrida used “difference” as “that which is other as well as an activity,” a simultaneous location and movement.\(^{96}\) Through these scholars, Sandoval asserts the importance of love as a hermeneutic as it escapes power. In this sense, Sandoval acknowledges that love is transformative and cannot be contained.

Hope, as part and parcel to love, translates into material possibility and visions of better futures. However, hope is often shut down by our “reality” as it is articulated by a specific system, in this case, the post-colonial state and capitalist economic system. Subjects often face overwhelming material realities that often diminish hope. I believe that my father’s material possibilities were limited. His entire formation in music revolved around professionalization. As stated earlier, this ideology was in line with the

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93 Sandoval, Methodology of the Oppressed, 140.
94 Ibid.141.
95 Ibid.142.
96 Ibid.
national Mexican sentiment at the time. Nevermind that the country had many other conceptions of music practice via the multitude of indigenous cultures within its borders. This was not conducive to the moral order of the day, which was “progress” and “modernity” and “professionalization.”

As Juan Pablo Silva Escobar asks, “Cuales son esos imaginarios que se confunden en la pantalla y se cristalizan en nuestras mentes?” Rather than seeing my father’s choices as “flawed,” I believe — as Noble feels about Eisenstein’s vision — that my father had no other way to imagine a relationship with music. In this sense, hope was absent and thus my father was not able to imagine otherwise.

Imagination is an important precursor to change. As I will demonstrate later in this dissertation, the Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero that jumpstarted in the late 1970’s, consciously disobeyed mainstream conceptions of jarocho music and culture that Eisenstein’s work and time period had sowed decades earlier. This defiant act, much through the work of imagination, re-instated the participatory practice of fandango. The re-instatement of fandango disrupted the social relations of music that an earlier generation had started, as it displaced the professional musician as the sole provider of music with the community music practice of fandango. As scholar Grace Hong has so eloquently stated, “the work of imagination is not frivolous or a superficial activity, but rather a material and social practice toward revolutionary change.”

As I sit with this photo album in my grasp, I can better understand my father’s motivation and rationale. His world had been shut down of possibilities. The times had spoken. There was no imagining otherwise. With this understanding, I can forgive him and myself. For despite the anger and contempt I had towards him over the years, for all the abuse he inflicted on our family, I understand the bigger economic and governmental order that prompted and shaped his belief system, and by default my childhood.

97 Which imaginings jumble in confusion on the screen, that in such a way crystallize in our minds?
98 The New Jaranero Movement.
CHAPTER TWO
Chican@ artivistas: Capital Markets and Resistance to Mind/Body Split

Artivista banner (author’s personal collection).

In this chapter, I discuss the scholarship that first helped me question ideas about music in our society. I add the consideration of political economy, which some of the initial scholarship does not discuss, and explore capital markets as a system of disembodiment or mind-body split. This discussion is interspersed with my introduction into the Chican@ artivista community and how the experience of using art as a tool of dialogue and resistance began to consolidate a new understanding of music in me.

UCLA and John Blacking

I was twenty years old and was to meet Professor Steven Loza about the possibility of joining the ethnomusicology department at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). It was 1993, and I was excited at the prospect of being a student there but also nervous and in disbelief that there could even be a place for me in the department. For starters, I did not have what I considered to be “musical abilities.” I understood “real” music as the Western or classical experience and, like many, had been instilled with an understanding that the structures, epistemologies, and overall aesthetics of Western music were superior to other forms of music. I never considered my experience to be of interest to anyone, least of all to a university.

To my surprise, on my first visit to the UCLA campus, Professor Loza clarified that my experience by way of my father’s informal yet rigorous training in Mexican popular music was more than valid. He said that my presence, ideas and experience as a woman of color were strongly needed on the university campus and he encouraged me to audition. Walking through Schoenberg Hall the day of my audition was terrifying.
Despite my nervousness, I spoke of my extensive “informal” music training and experience with authority and performed two Ranchera songs a capella. Two weeks later, I received word that I had been accepted into the program. I could not believe it! I was thrilled but wondered what was to come. I initiated my studies in the ethnomusicology department in the fall of 1993. In retrospect, the courses, curriculum and reading material my first year in the program were all a blur, with the exception of John Blacking’s *How Musical is Man?* (1973). Blacking’s landmark work was an important politicizing moment for me and remains significant for me to this day.

*How Musical is Man?* (1973) is a classic text in the field of ethnomusicology. *How Musical is Man?* is a result of John Blacking’s two-year stay in the Sibsa district between 1956 and 1958 and general fieldwork in Africa. Blacking was a classical pianist trained in the rigors and repertoire of Bach, Chopin and Mozart. To Blacking music was a system of order with a set of rules and patterns invented and developed by exceptional European musicians. His fieldwork in Africa, in particular his study of music practice in Venda culture gave him new insight into how they conceived of music, musical ability, practice and music function in society. In the course of his research, Blacking deconstructs not only his elite gaze, but also his own (Western) cultures’ relationship to music. That is, he awakened to a “deeper understanding” of his own relationship to music in conversation with the Venda.  

Early on in his study, Blacking concludes that his relationship to music was a result of “selective reinforcement.” Experiences with the Venda taught Blacking that music “can never be a thing in itself, and that all music is folk music, in the sense that music cannot be transmitted or have meaning without associations between people.” Blacking goes on to state that, “the functions of music in society may be the decisive factors promoting or inhibiting latent musical ability, as well as affecting the choice of cultural concepts and materials with which to compose music.” Despite Blacking’s elite beginnings, he humbles himself to the possibility that all music has essential processes that can be found in the constitution of the human body, particularly “in

101 Ibid., 6.
102 Ibid., x.
103 Ibid., xi.
patterns of interaction of human bodies in society.”

His understanding that music can never be a thing in itself stressed the importance of how a culture positions music, music practice and interaction with music. He concludes that his understanding of music is a consequence of his social and cultural environment.

Critiques regarding How Musical is Man? are few yet significant, and one in particular from Charles Keil accuses Blacking of failing to disclose the “ethnocentrisms” throughout his book. Although Blacking exalts the Venda and their cultural conceptions of music by comparing them to Western conceptions, his conclusion is condescending as “Western thought and criteria remain in control.”

I agree with Keil’s critique but cannot fault Blacking on what his project does not seek to do. Ultimately, Blacking’s project is one that looks at Venda music culture as a subject of study and not as a way of deconstructing why Western arrangements of music conceptions are tied to capital interests. In this regard, it is loaded with the classic Western gaze. However, a key passage that is reiterated throughout Blacking’s book exemplifies what interested me most about his project:

“We must ask why apparently general musical abilities should be restricted to a chosen few in societies supposed to be culturally more advanced. Does cultural development represent a real advance in human sensitivity and technical ability, or is it chiefly a diversion for elites and a weapon of class exploitation? Must the majority be made ‘unmusical’ so that a few may become more ‘musical’?”

Blacking places our Western understanding of musical “abilities” under question. He recognizes the social relations of music by expressing a desire to engage in an analysis of the cultural, historical and political dynamics that have shaped music affect, understanding, practice and production in our society.

Blacking’s personal discovery and new understanding of music underscored something that I had felt all my life. My experience in music, however consciously informal, erratic and far removed from an elite upbringing, was nonetheless the result of my Mexican immigrant experience. My experience had been one that did not judge me on the grounds of being “un-musical.” In fact, because my siblings and I had been told

104 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
we had “musical abilities,” we were pushed into a life of professionalization, so much so that it shaped how we understood the social relations of music.

As previously discussed, my father’s ideas of music and musical success were strongly tied to Mexican nationalism that was still being felt in the late 1940’s. Despite Mexico’s diverse participatory music culture, there was no alternative in the mainstream to the ideological music order of the country at the time. The national rhetoric in Mexico like many other places in Latin America was one of progress and modernity, and the professionalization of the Mexican musician was the call to order both through film and other cultural production. I realized that my understanding of music, like Blacking’s, was a result of my social and cultural environment. Subconsciously, I never doubted that what I felt music to be was not what I was taught to value in my home.

Blacking’s suggestion that social and cultural dynamics are important influences in one’s understanding of music and thus music practice validated my own experience. All at once, it woke me to a greater awareness of how different cultures structured music, music practice and music affect in their societies. Blacking’s arguments in How Musical is Man? corroborated the cognitive dissonance I felt. Music and the way that I was taught to view it was different from what I felt it was or should be, even if I did not have the awareness at the time to articulate it.

Blacking raises important questions about our understanding of music. Whereas Blacking draws attention to the differences between Western and Venda’s musical practices, I have come to see the differences more specifically in terms of commerce and capitalist systems. This understanding is informed by my experiences in community music practices. In what follows, I map my own change in understanding of music and art, based on my introduction into the world of Chican@ artivistas in East L.A., and the ways in which I began to explore other ways of interacting with music and creative expression within this community.


109 Music commerce has perpetuated an economic system that requires the “musical” and the “un-musical” to construct a common sense in our conceptions of music. I am not claiming that there isn’t such a thing as “musical” or “un-musical” I merely wish to point out how this conception is tied to the general music interaction and behavior and how the conceptions revolve around commerce.
Quetzal Among the World of Artivistas

During my first year of study at UCLA, I was through with conceiving of music in terms of performance. I wanted to remain close to music somehow, and by studying ethnomusicology I felt close to music without desiring to return to a life of performance. After my father’s death, my relationship to music was correlated with emotional pain and suffering. Despite my early childhood experience, I along with my brother and sister had continued to do some studio work and music projects together. I had been through major turmoil as well as harsh gender dynamics and sexism during different music projects that did not come to fruition.

When my friend Mark Hernández suggested my name as a singer to José Q. Flores, the founder of Quetzal, I was wary because I remained skeptical of the music industry. To my surprise, my friendship with Flores and work with the band Quetzal would be my initial acquaintance not with an industry, but rather a community of artists and musicians that forever changed my view of the function of music and art.

I met Flores in April of 1995, after having a short conversation over the phone. I had seen him perform with Quetzal a year prior at Troy Café, a coffee shop and Chicano artist hangout in the outskirts of Little Tokyo in L.A. It had become a site of refuge for Chican@ artists and musicians after the historic space Self Help Graphics and Arts closed its doors to music events. As the influential artist and ASCO member Willie Heron recalls, the creation of The Vex club at Self Help Graphics was meant to foster the experimental music as it related to his art in ASCO.

Formed in the early 1970’s, ASCO was a young group of Chican@ renegade street, visual and performance artists. Other notable members were Harry Gamboa, Jr., Gronk, Willie F. Herron III, and Patsi Valdez. In its inception in the early 1970’s, ASCO was ignored by the mainstream art world. Currently, it is considered one of the most innovative Chican@ artist collectives of their time, and their work has been featured in ASCO: Elite of the Obscure, A Retrospective, 1972-1987 (2011) through a collaboration

\[110\] Self Help Graphics & Art was located on the corner of Cesar Chavez and Gage. It has since moved to be off First street. Started by Sister Karen Bocalero, Self-Help Graphics became a space where artists could learn the art of printmaking. The space however also served as a site where musicians especially the Punk scene could have shows open to the public.

between the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Williams College Museum of Art.\textsuperscript{112} However, the Vexing concerts put an end to the collaboration with Sister Karen Bocalero’s space off of Brooklyn Ave.\textsuperscript{113} Self Help Graphics had always been supportive of the young artists and musicians, but soon had to close its doors to the music after Vexing audiences repeatedly trashed the place after Punk concerts. As spaces come and go, Self Help closed its doors to the music and Troy Café opened some years after.

*Quetzal* was playing at Troy and I had been invited by a friend to listen to them. I remember being captivated by the singer Lilia Hernández, and by Roció Marrón who was a very tall and talented violinist. They had a particular song called “*Agua de La Manguera*” that moved me deeply. I could relate to the clever lyrics, which spoke of hot summer days in East L.A:

\begin{quote}
Blue skies. Sunny eyes.
Walking down the street of life.
Tattered buildings, broken streets.
Clothes lines drying in the heat.
We have sunny eyes
We live happily in this little town,
Not too safe and sound.
Bullets fly in the middle of the night
And disappear with the morning light.
Eating *raspados*, making water balloons, drinking *agua de la manguera*.
Clean your room!
\end{quote}

I remember laughing along with others and all at once feeling a sense of nostalgia and pride. It was true! On hot summer days such as the ones that have repeatedly gripped East L.A. summers, water from the hose was the most gratifying experience after a hard day at play. The topic as well as the use of Spanglish (Spanish/English) lyrics made me feel right at home. I could relate to the experience and poverty, but without a sense of pity. The sentiment was one of pride and visions of hope.

\textsuperscript{113} Brooklyn Ave has since been re-named Cesar Chávez Ave after the now deceased Chicano labor organizer. The Vexing concerts served as a space from which to support a community of Punk rock musicians that went on to inspire a whole generation of musicians in Los Angeles.
Troy Café in the early 1990’s was an important place to encounter such discussions on the function and social relevance of music, art and culture.\textsuperscript{114} The co-founder and owner Sean Carrillo, was a veteran of the previous generation of Chicana/o artist movement and a former member of ASCO. Carrillo’s reputation as an artist as well as his friendships with Chicana/o artists populated the small coffee shop. Flores spent quite a bit of time there and states that his formation as a guitarist/songwriter was a result of the plethora of Chicana/o artists, musicians, poets and intellectuals who gathered in this space to discuss, critique and support each other’s work. Through Quetzal, I would meet many artists and musicians that quickly welcomed me into the community of artists and musicians. Most of the artists did not believe in art for art’s sake, but rather believed in using art as critical tools.

Troy Café was a small space. The greater part of the room was a long narrow corridor with a small corner stage and red brick walls that frequently displayed some local artists work. Black glass-paned doors marked the entrance into Troy Café that faced First Street. If you peered in from the outside, you could see the bar where baristas served coffee and baked goods. A long corridor led back to a small, brick stoned patio. The patio led out to a view of Alameda, Little Tokyo and a potholed parking lot. Although Troy Café served coffee and other edibles, the food was not what drew people there.

The most interesting part about Troy Café, were the patrons. The artist, musicians and intellectuals that frequented were fascinating. Their manner of dress, the unique Chicana hair and makeup set an atmosphere of creativity. Most of all, the conversations were engaging and interesting to be around. On any given night, there was some band or theater group utilizing the space to perform or rehearse. Music was always playing over the system or live on stage. People were supportive and conversed about their works in progress, made plans to collaborate or just sat at the many small tables in the V-shaped room to plot their next movidas.\textsuperscript{115} Some of the groups that I saw at Troy Café were Las Tres, Goddess 13, Lysa Flores, Sol, and Boca de Sandia to name a few. I remember meeting for the first time legendary Chicana punk rock musicians, such as Alice Bag,

\textsuperscript{115} Maneuvers.
Angela Flores, and Teresa Covarrubias, who were known as Las Tres, and being amazed by their songwriting and talent.

The work of these artists in this space, as Michelle Habell-Pallán notes, made an important impact in a historical moment of “shrinking public outlets for the circulation and discussion of alternatives and oppositional perspectives…[T]hese contemporary artists’ reworkings are significant in that they open a discursive space…that enables both critique of the status quo and dialogue concerning progressive social transformation.”

Sean Carrillo’s idea of founding a space, such as Troy, seemed to converge with the idea that money could be recycled within the community while supporting Chican@ artists at the same time. These late Troy Café days set me up for what was to come. Through the many events, concerts and performances that I would participate in as part of Quetzal over the next decade, along with extensive dialogue and interaction with other community musicians and artists, I slowly came into a critical consciousness that allowed me to deconstruct my father’s teachings and begin to engage in the practice of music in exciting new ways.

Through music practice, songwriting and performance within this community, I began to understand colonialism as a multi-sited practice with independent as well as interactive forces. Art and music practice in community would be the main analytic tools that would assist me in this understanding. Many years later, in graduate school at the University of Washington in Seattle, I would read about U.S. Third World feminist theory, feminist development theory, and ethnomusicology and other writings that would articulate academically what I came to understand among the community of Chican@ artivistas through music and artistic practices.

I previously discussed the ways in which the Mexican government utilized popular culture tools to consolidate Mexican national sentiment and how these cultural tools were also a way to perpetuate ideologies concerning modernity and progress. I want to continue this discussion by asking: what happens to the social relations of music when they are taken up as capital and nation building tools? How does disembodiment play a part in this venture? I would like to relate this discussion to John Blacking’s initial

question: “We must ask why apparently general musical abilities should be restricted to a chosen few in societies supposed to be culturally more advanced?” What social and political arrangements had to be constructed for societies to conceive of music, art and other creative expressions primarily as commodities?

These questions are important to my study concerning Chicana@ artivistas as I will later demonstrate how artivistas at present utilize art and creative expression both as a form of subsistence and as a way to resist capital markets’ social arrangements of music and art. I continue with a discussion on the body, for an understanding of the body in relation to capitalism is fundamentally important.

Colonial tools, The Body and the Extraction of Capital

“…[U]nderstanding the brown body and the regulation of its movements is fundamental in the reclamation of narrative and the development of radical projects of transformation and liberation.”

—Cindy Cruz

The formation of new knowledge that defied traditional academic disciplines such as women’s studies, global studies, ethnic studies, queer theory, post-structuralism and cultural studies articulated a general critique and deconstruction of colonial discourse of power as the varying disciplines general philosophy and framework. Feminist research scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggests that colonialism as an “expression” of imperialism has manifested itself in the following modes: economic, physical subjection of others, idea/spirit, and as a field of knowledge. She suggests that these categories can be seen as independent as well as interactive forces effective in the ongoing subjection of people of color in various sites and social systems. Music, poetry and culture production assisted

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119 Walter Mignolo recognizes sites that emerged to counter the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality, he asserts, “New spheres of knowledge came into being (women's studies, gender and sexuality studies, gay and lesbian studies, Afro-American studies, ethnic studies, Latino/as studies, etc.). What do all of them have in common? First, all of them incorporate the knower into the known, the personal and collective memory of communities configured around race, gender, and sexuality. Second, they all introduced into the social sphere of knowledge the perspective from the damnés, the disposed by colonial racism and patriarchy. And third, they introduced a new justification of knowledge: knowledge not at the service of the church, the monarch, or the state, but knowledge for liberation; that is, for subjective and epistemic decolonization.” W. Mignolo, "Citizenship, Knowledge, and the Limits of Humanity," Source: Volume 18, Number 2, Summer (2006): 312-331.
U.S. Third World feminists across disciplines in the deconstruction of power. It is no wonder since creative expressions are forms of communications that defy binaries, and that free the mind of narratives that in turn allow a space from which to imagine other relations and visions toward social justice.

According to Smith, one of many post-colonial tasks is an analysis of the “reach of imperialism” into our heads. In this regard, Smith suggests that we must “decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves and to claim a space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity.” A similar urging by Chicana feminist Cindy Cruz in the above quote suggests an understanding of the brown body and the regulations of its movements, which is “fundamental” to “transformation and liberation.” The body is after all the material vehicle from which we operate and move about society. Empire constitutes itself in relationship to its colonial subject. Divisions and binaries imposed on the human body and the body politic/body of the state are organized around gender, color, class, sexuality, and nation. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty states, the world is “traversed with intersecting lines of power and resistance.” All the delineations and abstractions are constituted in relation to each other and for the benefit of nation-state interests. Ideologies and culture have to be demarcated and maintained by government in order to rule by consent.

It is important to my project concerning Chican@ activists and their efforts to reinstate creative expression as community practices and analytic tools, and to explore some of the material practices that constituted and continue to uphold social market logic. I begin with black feminist scholar Bibi Bakare-Yusuf who provides us with an important look at how the tools of torture were used as a technique of disembodiment in slavery. I suggest that a disembodiment is the root of capitalist logic. I further suggest that these practices continue to have material and social effects in our present society.

The Body as a Source of Capital

123 Ibid., 3.
Black feminist scholar Bibi Bakare-Yusuf identifies how “different material practices are interwoven with the discursive to affect and shape the materiality of the body.” Bakare-Yusuf argues that the material practice of violence was a tool used by the slave economy to produce two kinds of bodies: (1) the body of knowledge and (2) the body of labor. As a way of extracting capital and wealth through slave labor, the tool of torture and violence was a way of inducing terror and horror upon the body. Torture was an “active and systematic deconstruction” of the African body. Bakare-Yusuf clarifies that the point was not to destroy the body, but to “deconstruct the body in pain” as torture became an “imitation of death” or a “sensory equivalent.” She continues:

“The violent subjection of the slaves was a way of transforming their bodies into an entity that could produce and reproduce the property necessary for accumulating wealth. Thus the enslaver/victimizer ‘needs the victim to create truth, objectifying fantasy in the discourse of the other’.”

The ultimate goal was to deconstruct all traces of humanity, civilization and freedom, which ensured the slaves subjection but all at once created the enslaver’s subjectivity. A disembodiment, an “active and systematic deconstruction” of the African body, had to be ensured to secure the extraction of capital.

Although Bakare-Yusuf articulates this practice in the context of African slavery, we can gather from other colonialist accounts that the tools of torture have been a multi-sited and age old practice. The use of terror was a “national sport” during the period of slavery and colonialism. “It was the logic underpinning the creation of colonial reality and identity: it serves as the mediator par excellence of colonial hegemony.” Based on Bibi Bakare Yusuf’s analysis on the deconstruction of the black body in pain, we can gather that the knowledge-base built around the material consequences of torture and slavery continues to reproduce black/brown bodies’ objectification both systematically

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128 Ibid., 178-9.
129 Tausig quoted in “The Economy of Violence: Black Bodies and the Unspeakable Terror, 179.
and through consent. We can also gather that these practices have structured and/or have had an impact on societal behaviors to this very day.

Black feminist scholar bell hooks has written extensively on the brutal treatment and sexual exploitation of enslaved black women. hooks contends that, due to race and sex, the black female slave received the greatest and most brutal treatment. Importantly, hooks not only reveals this history, she threads how it has led to a devaluation of black womanhood that continues to “permeate the psyche of all Americans and shaped the social status of all black women once slavery ended.”

Both Bakare-Yusuf and hooks uncover the material practices that continue to influence present day knowledge and behaviors. Both scholars uncover a seldom told history whose material trace is still being felt.

Bakare-Yusuf’s analysis on the materiality of the black body is not void of agency or hope. Despite the troublesome history of slavery, she reminds us that the “flesh” that is transformed to “body as property” is never annihilated. It is “hidden from the violation of the body.” The counter memory enables the slaves and their descendants to construct a different kind of history, a different kind of knowledge, a different kind of body that is outside the control of the dominant history and knowledge production. Bakare-Yusuf cites Black scholar Paul Gilroy to support her own understanding and importance of culture production as a voice and tool in the articulation of “counter memory:” “What can not be spoken in language is evoked through other cultural representations such as dance.” She goes on to state that while the experience of the middle passage and the “diasporic plight” might be, “resistant to (verbal) language, it is not resistant to representation.” Bakare-Yusuf stresses that the most ‘elemental’ expression of this traumatic experience can be found in the music and dance of the black diaspora which produces, “new cultural meanings of the African past, present and future.”

137 Ibid.
In support of this theory, Bakare-Yusuf gathers the assistance of African American writer Toni Morrison, who articulates agency or “site of memory” through the metaphor of a river: although humans straighten out rivers in order to create livable acreage, flooding occurs from time to time. She argues that the “flooding” of these spaces is precisely the act of remembering by the river. Water, having “the perfect memory” is thus always trying to “get back to where it was.” Similarly, for the black and brown body, our “rush of imagination” or “flooding” is the tracing back to our humanity, communicating whole and unbroken. The “rush of imagination” is what preoccupied so many artists that frequented Troy Café in the early 1990’s, with the many music, poetry and art events that took place. Through their art, they would address many issues concerning Chican@ and Mexican@ communities and their history of oppression in this country.

Troy Café however would soon succumb to the financial hardships of the times, which would alter the momentum of the gathering of artists that frequented and patronized the space. The closing of Troy Café left a void. Chican@ artists and musicians were then limited in where and when people could gather. The economy is a significant force that has a substantial bearing on creative and social endeavors, especially as it pertains to grassroots communities. The economy, social in this regard, arranges when and how people are able to gather regularly to express themselves. A discussion regarding markets as social institution is important to understanding how individual and communal creative expression are regulated by market capitalism. I will use feminist development theory to articulate the social underpinnings of economic systems.

**Feminist Development Theory and Social Institutions**

“A great deal of human behavior is not the result of individual preferences. Rather, it is governed by institutional rules, norms and conventions that have powerful material effects on people’s lives.”

— Naila Kabeer

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140 Ibid.
According to the U.N’s *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* (1989b), under globalization “some women have improved their position, [while] far more have become poor.” Poverty among women has increased, even within the richest countries, resulting in a feminization of poverty. Similarly in the 2008 *World Development Report* issued by the World Bank, the well being of women has not increased as expected with globalization. The World Bank report concludes that an inclusion of women in the global market system did not provide the relief development practitioners anticipated. There have been various feminist development theorists that have contributed to a better understanding of the reasons women and children’s well being have ceased to improve despite globalizations’ promises.142

Liberal neo-classical economies play a central role in the evolution of development thought and practices, where the primary goal and meaning is placed on economic growth.143 Economics as the “science” that studies human behavior as a relationship between competing ends and scarce means assumes that all agents within society have universally the same interests, which is to maximize their individual utilities.144 The ability to allocate scarce means between competing ends in order to maximize one’s utility is referred to in economics as “rational behavior.”145 What is assumed is that individual choice is a self-defined goal unimpeded and unconcerned with judgment by others’ opinions, needs and/or desires. It is in this climate of thought regarded as “rational” that women were inserted into the global economy in the early 1980’s. Rather than improve the economic conditions of women and children, they have taken a turn for the worse. At present, the feminization of poverty is a common character in and among the many detrimental effects of globalization.

In *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought* (1994), feminist development theorist Naila Kabeer maps a history and intellectual discourse

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142 In the early 1970’s feminist economist Esther Boserup left an important legacy as a scholar in the field of Economics for having articulated gender as an important factor to consider at World Bank meetings. However Boserup as well as other thinkers and economists concerned with gender assumed that a mere inclusion of women in the neo-liberal economic models would have a positive bearing on women’s lived experience. The fundamental feminist liberal theory of the “rational individual who logically exists prior to society and is essentially the same across societies,” failed to take into account the multiple and varying social structures that have a bearing on “choice.” Naila Kabeer, *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought* (London: Verso 1994), 27.
144 Ibid., 14.
145 Ibid.
concerning women in development practices. Kabeer’s project in *Reversed Realities* became a useful way of understanding why gender inequalities persist. Kabeer urged a look at the social structures in women’s lives. A structural perspective on women in development adheres to a social relations analysis that extends an interconnected understanding of a female’s position in any given society. Rather than an analysis strictly on women or men as isolated categories, a look at the interconnecting relationships that includes other social inequalities such as class, race, and sexuality are important in understanding the “concrete conditions” in both women and men’s lives.¹⁴⁶ An awareness of the social, economic and kinship structures that allow or negate women’s mobility, and thus their access to finances has been an important intervention in development practitioners’ thought processes. In addition, an understanding that there are regional differences in culture, language and social practices has made development practitioners and theorist more aware of the concrete conditions women experience in their respective cultures.

Relevant to my project concerning music are the categories by which Kabeer identifies social institutions as key components in the naturalization of varying gender roles and patriarchies, and how they vary across the world. Kabeer identifies social institutions as *markets, states, religion,* and *kinship/family.* To conceive of *markets* (economic policies) and/or *states* as *social* institutions highlights the humanity that is affected by these institutions. She concludes that these social institutions intersect and inform societies that ultimately affect individual subjects. After all, social institutions organize social and political life by “creating and regulating ideologies,”¹⁴⁷ which lead to social practices that have concrete effects on subjects. In this way social institutions inform the extent of one’s access, mobility and opportunities in society.

As an example, one of the most common arrangements that societies have instituted across the globe is gender. Although they vary from region to region, “women” or “men” are roles and meanings that social institutions give to visible biological difference. Gender in this sense is a performance that describes how identities, namely that of “woman” and “man,” should move about society and in relation to each other. To

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 65.
¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 42.
this end, gender identities are described, maintained and disciplined to the point of
naturalization in society. Moreover, these roles are relational in that men are often
constructed as superior to women, more able and more “logical.” “Woman” and “man”
may also describe rights and privileges depending on the society. Kabeer asserts that
social institutions define the “rules of the game.” Kabeer goes on to state:

“The rules may be written or un-written, explicit or implicit, codified in law,
mandated by policy, sanctified by religion, upheld by convention or embodied in
the standards of family, community and society.”

Ultimately, Kabeer contends that gender rules “play a powerful role in shaping human
behavior, in terms of both what is permitted and what is prohibited.” Gender is a
coherent example of how social institutions (markets, states, religion, and kinship/family)
create and demarcate difference to regulate and control behavior.

Much like gender conceptions, we can analyze how our relationship to music has
also been arranged over time and by way of social institutions, primarily through the
impetus of market capitalism. Through force or consent, in most “modern” societies,
music is seen mostly as a commodity. Participatory practices are in most social accounts
non-existent and we tend to regard music practice either as an incidental hobby or a
professionalized practice. Rarely do we conceive of music as a participatory community
practice. As George Lipsitz points out, “cultural institutions and the mass media depict
dominant cultures as “natural” which is to say, “normal.”

Lipsitz’s comment resonates with me as it mirrors my early conception of music where music as a commodity was
what was most “natural” and -“normal” in my home.

**Nation as a Social Construction**

To further complicate the role of social institutions on human behavior we must
acknowledge how social institutions in and of themselves are social constructions and
thus subject to change. “Nation,” for example, is a social construction that has aligned

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148 The social construction of gender can be proven by showing (1) variations in one region over time, (2) variations
across space (between different regions), and (3) variations in one region at the same time. By showing gender
variations in anyone of these categories disproves biological determinism.


150 Ibid., 47.

151 Ibid.

152 G. Lipsitz, “Cruising Around the Historical Bloc: Postmodernism and Popular Music in East Los
perceptions of the self and others in such a way that nationality is as close to one’s identity as gender. Benedict Anderson has written extensively on the historical, social and political impetus that gave rise to “nation-ness.”\footnote{B. Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London, New York: Verso, 1991), 3.} Anderson has mapped how nation has come into historical being, how its meaning has changed over time, and finally why it continues to hold such profound legitimacy in people’s minds.

Anderson states that “nation-ness,” like religion, is an \textit{imagined} political community. “Imagined” is stressed because one can consider that most “members” of a nation will never meet their fellow members yet they imagine themselves as members of the same nation, and “imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”\footnote{Ibid., 6.} Thus, “nation” is an invention distinguished not by whether or not they are false or genuine, but by the “style in which they are imagined.”\footnote{Ibid., 7.} Although people tend to classify nationality as an entity or an ideology, Anderson contends that it is more like religion or kinship. He stresses the validity of nation by reminding us that, like religion, belief and self-sacrifice (i.e. death, servitude) for the nation is starkly similar.

According to Anderson, important to the overall understanding of the development of nationalism are changes in three fundamental cultural conceptions in Western Europe that had been in place since antiquity. First, an understanding that ideas and script language offered privileged and ontological truth began to be questioned. On the one hand, the printing press and print languages challenged the hegemony of Latin as predominant, while on the other hand they established new hegemonies in regions with diverse dialects, particularly due to the democratization of script. Second, the belief that “high centre-monarchs” were persons apart from other human beings that somehow ruled by divine assignment was also displaced. And, finally, the concept of temporality (history and cosmology) although once indistinguishable, was also being questioned. These interlinked “certainties” were weakened by a fast changing world that questioned divine authority, and absolute knowledge ceased to have “an axiomatic grip on men’s minds.”\footnote{Ibid., 6.} Thus, Anderson states that “a search for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together” was essential to maintain ideological power. Nations were
invented where they did not exist, and were defined in response to the modern world’s need to redistribute and consolidate power. Benedict Anderson’s intellectual work on the development and invention of “nation” makes clear how, over time, ideas naturalize in the subject’s mind.

**Nationalism and Culture Production**

In taking Anderson’s concept of “imagining community” beyond the focus of print capitalism as a primary source for the rise of the conception of nations, scholars argue that aside from print capitalism, music, poetry and other forms of culture production were utilized to assist in the nation-building project. For instance, folklorists have similarly acknowledged how poetry became useful in the formation of “nation-ness” during the Enlightenment. William Wilson, for example, explores the relationship between folklore research and the rise of romantic nationalism in 18th and 19th century Europe.\(^{157}\) German nationalist Johann Herder’s ideas are presented by Wilson as the foundation for the creation of new national mentalities rooted in an imagined past based on folk poetry. As stated by Anderson, the codification of language as a result of print capitalism simultaneously disrupted regional languages. Wilson maps the extensive fieldwork Herder documented in attempts to build “Germanhood.” Herder disagreed with the liberal philosophies of the Enlightenment and thought his native Germany had been damaged by the increased use of French language and thought. According to Wilson, German poetry was where Herder believed his people could find their prime German essence.

Ethnomusicologist Tomas Turino discusses the construction of nation in relation to music (2000). In *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (2000), Turino observes how music was an important tool in the formation of Zimbabwe cultural and national identity. He uses *cosmopolitanism* as an important pre-requisite to nationalism, stating that “nationalism is a key cosmopolitan doctrine.”\(^{158}\) Specifically, Turino uses cosmopolitanism to refer to “objects, ideas, and cultural positions that are

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\(^{157}\) According to Wilson; “In contradiction to liberal nationalism, romantic nationalism emphasized passion and instinct instead of reason, national differences instead of common aspirations, and above all, the building of nations on the traditions and myths of the past” (Wilson, 820).

widely diffused through the world and yet are specific only to certain portions of the populations within given countries.” 159 In this sense, Turino argues that “cosmopolitanism is simultaneously local and translocal.”160 He continues: “nationalism emerges out of cosmopolitanism and, in turn, it functions to diffuse cosmopolitan ethics and practices among culturally distinct groups within the state’s territory.”161 Importantly, Turino demonstrates the “continuities and parallel cultural effects of colonialism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism,” which are usually understood in opposition to each other.162 Cosmopolitanism may be understood as the initiator or glue that facilitates and sets a national ideology in motion. In this sense, cosmopolitanism as “material technologies, and conceptual frameworks” is able to draw on local “traditions” that can help generate national sentiment.163

**Emotions**

As we deconstruct social institutions and interrogate the social forces that construct the social relations of music we tend to overlook an important factor: emotions. Emotional value, along with the social arrangements of music and gender, is an abstract yet powerful variable that can perpetuate or alter societal arrangements. Raymond William’s work offers a general thesis on the non-static fluid perception of social structures within a hegemony characterized by his concept of “structures of feelings.”164 Williams insists that we are concerned with meaning and values as “they are actively” lived and felt.165 Williams’s conceptualization of hegemony as an “active process” and emphasis on the “cultural” allows for a fluid and active view of the self and the public as contingent on the control or negotiation with dominant forces.166

159 Ibid., 7.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid., 13.
162 Ibid., 4.
163 I acknowledge that tradition is not static. “Tradition” however as a social construction can nonetheless come to represent a nation and a people worldwide. By the same token it is troubling that ethnic cultures can also be constructed as “primitive.”
164 It is a re-conceptualization to the Marxist theoretical framework of “hegemony” by adhering to the state and economic factors of total domination, as well as Gramcian model of, “active social and cultural forces” (Wilson, *Marxism and Literature*, 117).
166 Ibid.
Based on Williams’s “structures of feelings” and their role in hegemony, we can gain insight into the ways music becomes an important tool in the creation of national sentiment for both dominant and subdominant groups.\footnote{Williams, “Hegemony”, 116.} Turino gives us extensive examples through his scholarship on music and the myriad ways that nation-states and competing minority social groups utilize music and emotion for the consolidation of power.\footnote{Moving Away From Silence: Music of the Peruvian Altiplano and the Experience of Urban Migration (1993), Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music (2000), Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation (2008).} As Turino states, “nationalism is basically emotional and has to be succeeded.”\footnote{Turino, Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 172.}

Turino provides two examples from his work in Africa. Emotions were an important element to consider for the National Democratic Party (NDP) in Ghana.\footnote{Ibid.} The NDP was a new shift in national discourse that advocated for the idea that Africans should rule themselves rather than negotiate a “partnership” with colonial power. Ironically, the NDP initiated this ideology through cultural nationalism.\footnote{Ibid., 170.} Turino cites how publicity secretary Robert Mugabe was open about his use of emotional sentiment to win nationalist party support.\footnote{Ibid., 171.} He states, “[Mugabe’s] aim was to consciously inject emotionalism into the thinking of the nationalists....To win broad based support among all Africans in Rhodesia, the struggle had to be made part of the people’s daily life. He appealed to their emotions and to their spiritual and cultural values. He encouraged them, through party publicity, to value their heritage.”\footnote{Smith and Simpson as quoted in Turino, Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music (2000 [(1981: 37) 171].}

Turino’s second example involves Ghana’s GDP tactics and use of music to affect the public’s emotions, spiritual and cultural values remind me of similar efforts made by the Mexican post-Revolutionary government. Important to note in both examples are the multiple ideologies at work within a single stroke. The appeal to the public’s emotions is tied to both nation and modernity projects. “Nation-ness” and modernity are both being summoned to the public consciousness through music and emotions. National causes in resistance to colonialism or political domination such as the GDP in Ghana have nonetheless “accepted the very intellectual premises of ‘modernity’ on which colonial
domination was based.”\textsuperscript{174} Important to mention are the ways in which modernity always implies a replacement of the “old” with the “new.” Turino states:

“As a key symbol in this ideology, the term modern is used un-reflexively to assert an all-pervasive ‘present.’ Whereas the ‘traditional’ is relegated to an inferior historical past.”\textsuperscript{175}

Similarly, Kabeer argues:

“While modernization theorists used different combinations of social and economic factors to explain the process of change, they generally shared a common emphasis on changes in values and attitudes as a critical prerequisite for the transition to the modern society.”\textsuperscript{176}

Similarly ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino has stated:

“As a key symbol in this ideology, the term modern is used un-reflexively to assert an all-pervasive ‘present.’ Whereas the ‘traditional’ is relegated to an inferior historical past.”\textsuperscript{177}

As Kabeer indicates, there must be “changes in values and attitudes as a critical prerequisite for the transition to the modern society.”\textsuperscript{178}

The norms and customs of the so-called “third world” are against the rational self-interest toward the goal of achieving modern status.\textsuperscript{179} Social institutions in accordance with modernity projects create and rely on a discourse that often finds their local customs to be backward or, as Turino states above, “relegated to an inferior historical past.”\textsuperscript{180} Such was the case in post-Revolution Mexico. The use of the Indian as a “cipher for a proto-national identity” was important to the overall formation of a Creole self, distinct from the “Spanish peninsular identity” of the mestizo.\textsuperscript{181} The collective identity of the mestizo,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{174} Turino,\textit{ Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music}\ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 164.
  \item \textsuperscript{175} Turino,\textit{ Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music}\ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 163.
  \item \textsuperscript{176} N. Kabeer,\textit{ Reversed Realities: Gendered Hierarchies in Development Thought}\ (London: Verso 1994), 16.
  \item \textsuperscript{177} Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe\ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
  \item \textsuperscript{178} Kabeer,\textit{ Reversed Realities: Gendered Hierarchies in Development Thought}\ (London: Verso 1994), 16.
  \item \textsuperscript{179} Rationality is a fundamental concept in liberal economic theories. What is assumed is that subjects always make the most “rational” choices in economic practices. Feminist development theorists find this troublesome as “rational” is subjective. Subjects consider and or are restrained when making choices. What is rational to one subject could be irrational for the next. Thus the idea of rational choices as a universal human quality is irrelevant when considering other important subjectivities such as: gender, race, class, and sexuality.
  \item \textsuperscript{180} T. Turino,\textit{ Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe}\ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 164.
  \item \textsuperscript{181} A. Noble, “Seeing Through Que Viva Mexico!: Eisenstein’s Travels in México,”\textit{ Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies} 12, no. 2-3 (2006): 177.
\end{itemize}
however, significantly embraced the conceptual death of the Indian by conceiving him/her as extinct in order to successfully embrace the premises of modernity.\(^{182}\)

Modernity is not exclusive to capitalism. As ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice demonstrates in *May It Fill Your Soul* (1994), after World War II during the Communist period, traditional Bulgarian music and village contexts were disciplined to become “instruments of the state.”\(^{183}\) As Rice states, “Organized prettified, and cleaned up, village forms and practices were given back to the people as a symbol of national pride, of the state’s ability to organize itself and its people, and of progress made by the Communist party in creating an industrialized, educated society in which new values replaced old ones.”\(^{184}\)

Clearly not relegated only to capitalist societies, modernity as an ideology can be used by those in power under any economic institution. Modernity as a condition and ideology always implies a linear progression that must be aspired to. What is not understood is that modernity as an idea set forth by the West has no real end. That is to say, there is no determinant, no where or when, no way of assessing if a country has reached “modern status.” Most significantly the modernist project implies an “us” and a “them.” Western ideology sets the standard and the rest must follow, or be considered un-modern and in need of “development.”

“Nation,” modernity and gender have all been naturalized in such a way that we overlook how they have structured both public and private interactions. Mohanty reminds us, however, that the world is “traversed with intersecting lines of power and resistance.”\(^{185}\) Among these intersecting lines of power, I see the resistance in how Chican@ *artivistas* began to engage art, music and other forms of creative expression as dialectic tools. I return to my discussion of Chican@ *artivistas* and how my experiences with them continued to shed light on the social relations of music and other forms of creative expression.


\(^{183}\) Ibid.

\(^{184}\) Ibid.

The Popular Resource Center (PRC)/Centro Regeneracion in Highland Park

This is the Troy Café site in Little Tokyo at the corner of Alameda and First Street. This space is currently inhabited by a restaurant chain called Señor Fish (author’s personal collection).

“Chicano/a musical culture and its political work offer us invaluable bottom-up perspectives on the terrain of counter politics and cultural creation at the beginning of the twenty-first century.”

—Víctor Hugo Viesca 186

By 1996, there were rumors that Troy Café would permanently close its doors. The scene at Troy’s was fading and it seemed as though, yet again, a welcoming creative space was succumbing to the financial pressures of rent inflations in Downtown L.A. It’s replacement became Centro Regeneración. Flores of Quetzal states that the first person to invite him to Centro Regeneración was Mark Torres. Torres had a radio show, “Travel Tips for Aztlán,” with Pacifica Radio in Los Angeles on 90.7 KPFK. Torres was always searching for new talent by Chican@ artists as he was committed to exposing the area to local Chican@ and Latin@ groups through his show. Having met during early Troy days, Torres invited Flores to a show at Regeneración to listen to an emerging Chicano Reggae band called Quinto Sol.

Regeneración was the physical space. The Popular Resource Center (PRC) was the non-profit organization that worked out of Regeneración. People referred to the space as the PRC or Regeneración, but either way you ended up at 89 Ave 57 in Highland Park off of Figueroa Blvd in North East L.A. Regeneración was named after a radical Mexican publication that existed at the height of the Porfiriato-pre-Mexican revolution of 1910. Ricardo Flores-Magon was the founder of the popular newspaper that espoused revolutionary ideas of its time. In admiration and solidarity to the efforts by Flores-Magon, Regeneración was chosen as a name for this new space. Zack de La Rocha, frontman and M.C. for an up and coming hip-hop rock band Rage Against the Machine, co-founded Centro Regeneración. Rage had just been signed by a major label and was touring aggressively all over the world. For this reason, De La Rocha was in the space sporadically but was generous enough to provide funding when needed.

The space itself was not much to look at. It was a gutted warehouse with a small kitchen and one bathroom. There was a side room that housed an artist/resident, who supervised the grounds and made sure that the people who came and went were respectful of the space. No drugs or B.S. were allowed and the artist/resident made sure of that. There were many people who shared this responsibility over the years, but the person I remember being there the longest was Rudy (Rude) Ramírez. Also a musician, Rudy Rude as he was known was a drummer for a Chicano Rock/Hip-Hop band called Aztlan Underground. He was a quiet guy with strong attractive features. Being one of the founders, he was dedicated to Regeneración’s well being. Ramírez did not drink and he did not smoke. If he saw someone unknown to him in the space, he was sure to ask what they were doing there and who they came with. Artists utilizing the space had to clean up after themselves, and refrain from doing anything illegal or dangerous that could bring harm to themselves or others. These actions could pose a risk to Regeneración and could result in it being shutdown or harassed by the cops. There were rarely problems, but you knew not to fuck with Rudy and if he asked you to leave you’d best move quickly.
There was a zeitgeist revolving around music, community and art. Flores was inspired by the space and energy he witnessed the night that Quinto Sol played. Shortly thereafter, Flores approached Rudy Rude and De La Rocha about utilizing the space to organize an artist collective. Flores had simultaneously been attending meetings and study groups conducted by the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico (NCDM) focused around the recent Zapatista uprising. Flores’ father, Roberto Gonzalez-Flores, was also a central figure in these study groups. The purpose of the NCDM meetings was to study the Zapatista communiqués and teachings. Flores invited Aida Salazar, De La Rocha and Ramírez to the study group.

Flores claims that NCDM meetings were disappointing in that they approached the Zapatistas solely as a political movement. He says that NCDM’s approach was an age-old political tactic in the guise of 1970’s ways of organizing, where formal intellectual discourse was prioritized over art, music and culture. Some members of the artist collective similarly felt that this approach was stagnant, and that it did not necessarily have a significant reach or an impact on the local community. Flores elaborates, “We were armed with art and wanted to approach and explore neoliberalism, government and empire via the tools of art and cultural production.” Salazar states that they started planning events for the NCDM and began to gather as many artists as possible.

The PRC: “In the Red” and “Caught Between a Whore and an Angel”

188 Ibid.
Flyer for “Caught Between a Whore and An Angel” show (Author’s personal Collection).

Although they never officially named their group, the first manifestation of the artist collective consisted of José Q. Flores, Rudy “Rude” Ramírez, Patricia Valencia, Antonio Willie García, Joe “Peps” Galarza, and Aída Salazar. The discussions revolved around music, art and culture beyond capital gains. According to Flores, “some of the talks were about the kind of impact we wanted to have as artists. We were throwing around initial ideas concerning art and community engagement.” With time and youth’s energy, in 1999, the group organized their first show entitled “In the Red.”

“In the Red” consisted of music, performance art, poetry and visual art that challenged ideas concerning race, class and sexuality. The show was fashioned in a variety show format. A charismatic M.C. named Humberto, also known as “El H,” hosted the show. The show engaged the audience in many formats that ranged from visual art, poetry, music and participatory installation art.

One such installation fashioned artist/painter Joe Galarza covered in gold iridescent paint wearing nothing but a loincloth. The image of Galarza covered in gold paint invoked Jesus of Nazareth for his arms were extended on a wooden cross simulating a crucifixion. A tube protruded from underneath his loincloth. When sucked, the tube fed

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189 Oral history Interview (Los Angeles CA: January 6, 2012.)
an audience member libation in the form of water. Television sets were placed on the floor surrounding Galarza’s crucified body. Amid the golden Christ was a number of American flags soiled with blood.

Throughout the show, members of the artist collective as well as many audience members approached the golden Christ and drank from the spout protruding from Galarza’s groin. They would then proceed to pick up sledge-hammers and destroy the television sets on the ground. I suggest that this interactive art installation had little or no antecedent, but it was indeed reminiscent of and inspired by ASCO. The countless symbolic images and gestures that cited religion and media as tools of empire and oppression invoked important dialogues in the audience that night. For all intents and purposes, “In the Red” was a success. Flores recounts, “From there, all the crazy organizing started happening.”

Shortly after “In the Red” came another show entitled “Caught Between a Whore and an Angel.” This show was a powerful testament to the strong female presence within the community. It was also a testament to the emerging gender discussions taking place within the artist collective. The body as a site of contempt, sacredness and desire within Mexican and Chican@ culture was the themse explored in this important show. Chicana artists such as Rachel Salinas, Patricia Valencia, and Aida Salazar as well as other musicians, poets and artists came together again in a variety show format to engage in discussions on “the whore” and “the angel.” The theme of the show prompted discussion on how these titles disciplined women through various means.

Zapatista teachings were an important source of inspiration for the artist collective organizers that encouraged community dialogue based on race, class, gender and sexuality. A powerful moment in the show that reflected this influence was a collaborative piece between Aida Salazar and Patricia Valencia. Their piece was titled, “A Tribute to Comandante Ramona.” This piece was dedicated to Ramona, a prominent Zapatista commander who had been stricken ill with cervical cancer. Salazar recounts:

190 Ibid.
“She was the figure who really spoke to us. It was ironic to us that her struggle...her fighting for equity for women in her community...the world really...but she was dying from cervical ailment when she had never even had children.”

Salazar wrote a poem about Ramona while Patricia built a metal female rib cage with dangling wax baby dolls on the sides. Additionally, Patricia suggested that, while Salazar recited her poem, she and Valencia wearing nightgowns would throw guts and animal organs about the stage. Patricia also occasionally hammered away at a cow’s heart. Salazar claims that many people had to leave the room because it became too much to handle. I remember the piece clearly. It felt violent. There was strong silence and gasps as onlookers moved through the piece. I had never seen women portray such strong character presence.

As part of this show, I performed a song related to the theme with Quetzal’s violinist at the time Roció Marrón. “Caught Between a Whore and an Angel” was well attended. It brought to the surface many female artists within the community, and prompted important dialogue amongst all artists especially the women. Most importantly, “Caught Between a Whore and an Angel” inspired other female artist collectives, some of which continue to thrive to this day.

The Body as Knowledge, Ideological, and Physical Site

According to Chela Sandoval, Chicana modes of theorizing epistemologies, praxis and styles of resistance bear a historical trajectory (i.e., colonization, sexism, racism) that have given birth to ways of being and thinking needed to not only survive, but thrive amid a Eurocentric hegemony. As the above artistic examples demonstrate, Chicana artivistas center the body in community art discourse. The “brown body” as a source of knowledge is done through a strategy of what Sandoval calls “differential consciousness.” Influenced by queer Chicana scholar Cindy Cruz, I acknowledge that an understanding of the “brown body” and regulations of its movements are “fundamental in the reclamation of narrative and the development of radical projects of

192 Oral history interview (Los Angeles CA: April 13, 2011).
194 Ibid.
transformation and liberation.”¹⁹⁵ Art allows the body to articulate “that which is linked to whatever is not expressible through words.”¹⁹⁶ This mode of consciousness is precisely the mode by which Chican@ artivistas engage their art to prompt community dialogue. “Caught Between a Whore and an Angel” created a night of dialogue around the discourses that concerned the reception of women’s bodies. In this way, the PRC warehouse became a safe space for introspection, dialogue and critique.

The artistic work absorbed the unease associated with “whore” and “angel,” and allowed people to reflect on the art and to discuss the power of the pieces. In this way, Chicana artivistas claimed a space through their art. Sandoval states that “differential consciousness” is accessed through “poetic modes of expression: gestures, music, images, sounds, words that plummet or rise through signification to find some void — some no place — to claim their due.”¹⁹⁷ The body, then, was the source of an “activity of consciousness...as it enables movement ‘between and among’ ideological positionings.”¹⁹⁸

The Body and Space

As I and other scholars have stated, art is a tool that is able to most effectively address sociopolitical and ideological power in societies.¹⁹⁹ Through various means of creative expression, women of color artists and scholars have been able to articulate how power is constituted in relation to bodies. The claiming of space through art and poetry is a common woman of color strategy in the deconstruction of power. One of the most prolific theorists in this regard is Gloria Anzaldúa, who effectively utilizes poetry to imagine and claim spiritual, physical, and ideological space in the academy and elsewhere. Anzaldúa introduced “borderconsciousness” in her groundbreaking work Borderlands/La Frontera: A New Mestiza Consciousness (1987). Borderconsciousness as a physical and ideological space articulates an embodied experience for the Chican@. This concept has been an important addition to the Chican@ theoretical vocabulary, and

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.
¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 139.
¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 57,8.
an innovative theory that articulates the psychosocial and material effects of being Chican@ amid a Eurocentric hegemony.\(^\text{200}\) In this sense, Chican@ reality as experienced through the brown body gave way to an entire social theory metaphorically tied to the geopolitical site of the U.S./Mexican border. The brown body as a source was the impetus surrounding an entire field that catapulted a theoretically groundbreaking Chican@ feminist discourse, or borderconsciousness.

The discourse and trajectory that has been inspired by borderconsciousness is a prime example of the ways in which Chicana embodied knowledge created through the medium of creative expression can generate a theoretical space from which to counter Eurocentric paradigms of a mind/body split. Her poetic inscriptions and correlation of a mestiza consciousness to the physical U.S./Mexican border as “una herida abierta,” open wound or “the liminal space” is an important intervention in academia.\(^\text{201}\) Although Anzaldúa’s intellectual project has been critiqued for not abiding by academic paradigms, she nonetheless broke through traditional epistemology and methodological rules by introducing a project that refuses a positivist framework or mind/body split. Anzaldúa’s Borderlands/La Frontera creates a space from which to elaborate on an embodied existence. The brown body is centered and becomes a site where alternative modes of theorization may take place. To date, borderconsciousness is a powerful contribution to theoretical vocabularies that have since been utilized across academic and artistic disciplines.

In relation to borderconsciousness, Chicana feminist geographer Mary Pat Brady offers a concise explanation on the literary processes that shape how places are understood and defined.\(^\text{202}\) In Extinct Lands Temporal Geographies: Chicana Literature and the Urgency of Space (2002), Pat Brady theorizes on the discursive creation of space through an analysis of early Southwest literature. Specifically, Brady excavates the intent of capitalist language in reference to geography and descriptions of landscape, claiming that geopolitical spaces via borders, architectural structures, capitalist development

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\(^{200}\) A mestizo is a person of mixed race; Spanish and Indigenous blood, historically tied to colonization of the Americas by the Spanish.
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projects and housing displace people as well as their memories. Brady registers these changes of space as “performative” concluding that space is processual, in other words it changes and “goes extinct.”\textsuperscript{203} Along with changes in terms of space, society can also reorganize such that culture can also disappear or become memory. Brady suggests that, “space depends on the notion of articulation.”\textsuperscript{204} Literature thrives at the intersection of “shaping powers of language” as well as the “productive powers of space.”\textsuperscript{205} The idea that space is “produced” linguistically unsettles the assumption that space is simply something that is tied to “natural terrain.”\textsuperscript{206} Brady continues:

“The process of producing space however quotient or grand, hidden or visible, has an enormous effect on subject formation, on the choices people can make and on how they conceptualize themselves, each other and the world.”\textsuperscript{207}

\textit{Borderconsciousness} became the differential strategy by which Anzaldúa unarmed Euro-racist academic paradigms while simultaneously creating a space from which to articulate the Chicana body’s complex theories. Furthermore, Anzaldúa’s unique and creative epistemology also defied academic notions of style and instead introduced poetry to support her arguments:

“For only through the body, through the pulling of flesh, can the human soul be transformed. And for images, words, stories to have this transformative power, they must arise from the human body — flesh and bone — and from the Earth’s body — stone, sky, liquid, soil.”\textsuperscript{208}

In the next chapter, I discuss the significance of indigenous pedagogy in Chican@ \textit{artivistas}’ creative work, and the process and organization of one of the most important and formative \textit{encuentros} for Chican@ \textit{artivistas}. Moreover, I examine how this experience has continued to inform the work that is generated in East L.A. to this very day.

\textsuperscript{204} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{208} G. Anzaldúa. \textit{Borderlands/La Frontera: A New Mestiza Consciousness} (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute Press 1987), 75.
CHAPTER THREE

The Big Frente Zapatista and Art as a Tool

“Chicano/a musical culture and its political work offers us invaluable bottom-up perspectives on the terrain of counterpolitics and cultural creation at the beginning of the twenty-first century.”

—Victor Hugo Viesca

By 1996, Quetzal was gigging on a regular basis.\(^{210}\) We worked tirelessly, but did not necessarily make money. “Work” usually meant free gigs and presentations all over the city of Los Angeles. Quetzal was one of many bands that played anywhere for little to no pay. In many ways, Chican@ artivistas were part of a vast network of musicians as a resource to community organizers and organizations that could draw upon them for their fundraisers and events surrounding urgent issues of the time. The content of Quetzal’s musical work adhered to the struggles of our communities and our sense of social justice. We were consistently asked to play at rallies against local and federal legislation harmful to immigrant and Latino communities, such as Prop 187. Benefit concerts and performances for the Bus Riders’ Union, Justice for Janitors, National Commission for Democracy (NCDM), Self Help Graphics, Office of the Americas, PRC, KPFK 90.7 FM, Local/National MECHA organizations, Rigoberta Menchú, and the Zapatista struggle were just a few of the local, national, and international causes that we supported and participated in through our music.

The network of Chican@ artivistas also relied on each other for support. Artivistas of all genres and mediums would donate their services to event or group fundraisers for future projects. This arrangement came with an understanding that the beneficiary would one day return the favor. Music groups such as Ozomatli, Aztlán Underground, Ollin, Quinto Sol, Quetzal, Lysa Flores and The Blues Experiment are but a few of the bands that shared resources. In addition, poets, graffiti artists, painters, muralists, filmmakers, and theatre groups, including Teatro Chusma, Jose Ramirez, Omar Ramirez, Nuke, Teatro Chusma, Smoking Mirrors (filmmaker collective), In Lak Ech\(^{211}\),


\(^{210}\) Gigging is slang for performing in the music world.

\(^{211}\) In lak ech is Nahuatl for “Tu eres mi otro yo” or “you are a reflection of me.”
and Mujeres de Maiz were also central to this network. The social energy revolving around the artistry could be felt at the PRC and around the city. As Viesca states, in the above passage the Chican@ music scene was an “invaluable bottom-up perspective on the terrain of counter politics and cultural creation.”

Victor Hugo Viesca is one of few scholars who have written on the Chican@ artivista scene in East L.A. He focuses on the historical and sociopolitical groundwork that sets off the grassroots movement, particularly the music scene. Although he does not use the term Chican@ artivistas, he nonetheless repeatedly highlights how music, both in content and production, was a tool in the struggle for social justice. Viesca makes reference to the ways in which the music was also a relational tool amongst the groups, and highlights the ways in which the resources within the community were shared.

Viesca recognizes the Eastside scene as one that is grounded in the “new spatial and social relations generated in Los Angeles in the transnational era,” as a “floating site of resistance, a mechanism for calling an oppositional community into being through performance.” Indeed, the community of artivistas was both “product of and means for countering the impact of globalization on low-wage workers and aggrieved racialized populations” by the way in which they offered their music and art for the causes both in content and by their presence at the many functions. Important to the work of artivistas are the many physical spaces that allowed artists and musicians to gather to create music, art and culture together. These spaces included Candelas Guitars in Boyle Heights, Troy Café in Little Tokyo, Luna Sol in Pico Union, the Eastside Café, Peace and Justice Center in Downtown L.A., Centro Regeneración in Highland Park, and the Aztlán Cultural Arts Foundation in Lincoln Heights.

In contemplating questions of community building techniques, Viesca quotes Flores of Quetzal who asks, “how [do you] to create an identity as a way to build a

212 Women of Maiz.
214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
217 Originated by Roberto González-Flores, it was first known as the Westside Café. These concerts were some of the first which were given at Loyola Marimount University and other parts of the city. At present, it has been renamed the Eastside Café and its permanent space is now in Highland Park, CA.
foundation so that you can communicate and collaborate with other communities?" I suggest that Flores’ question resonates with a self-reflexive exercise and recognizes the importance of *relationality*. I borrow *relationality* from indigenous research scholar Shawn Wilson who has generated scholarship on indigenous research methods. Wilson’s scholarly efforts have attempted to maintain, transmit and clarify an “indigenous way of doing and being in the research process.” Specifically, Wilson’s work has been about articulating the basis of an Indigenous research paradigm. With an understanding that we cannot remove ourselves from our realities to examine the world, relationships and relationality becomes central in the Indigenous research methods.

In Wilson’s book, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (2008), he states that:

“The concepts or ideas are not as important as the relationships that went into forming them. Again, an Indigenous epistemology has systems of knowledge build upon relationships between things, rather than on the things themselves. It is important to recognize that the epistemology includes entire systems of knowledge and relationships.”

The Zapatistas stressed the importance of building relationships across the globe. *Relationality* is part and parcel to Zapatista philosophy, which inspired Chican@ *artivista* praxis and hence Flores’ need to extend his reach into other communities. Art praxis as a community-building tool has roots in relationality and *convivencia*, which are central to Zapatista political philosophy as informed by Mayan philosophy. A discussion on the full impact of Zapatista philosophy in *artivista* praxis will help explain the hermeneutics of Chican@ *artivista* professional and community work.

**Zapatista + Artistas = Zapartista**

The *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (E.Z.L.N) commonly known as the Zapatistas was the first post-modern revolution that was not seeking governmental power.223 On January 1, 1994, the day the North American Free Trade Agreement

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221 Ibid.
223 The Zapatista National Liberation Army.
(NAFTA) was to go into effect, indigenous Mayan communities in Chiapas, Mexico, took over four municipalities in the state including the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Mayan communities claimed grievances with the Mexican government and the neo-colonial forces of globalization. Their uprising was an attempt to bring focus and attention to their struggle. Their tactics also significantly relied on building alliances with other communities in struggle around the globe.224

Most unusual was the way in which Zapatistas consistently appeared masked in the media. Concealed by pasamontañas, pañuelos or paliacates, at no time did they allow their full faces to show in public.225 Through their masks, the Zapatistas expressed to the world their struggles. However, the language in which they chose to communicate was not conventional political language.226 They often made their claims through dichos, or sayings, like “¡No tenemos que pedir permiso para ser libres!”227 and “¡De tras de nosotros estamos ustedes!”228 In addition, they boldly and repeatedly declared their mal gobierno or bad government was corrupt. In this sense, they avoided the traditional “discourse of power,” and spoke to the heart and from the heart.229

Among the constituency of indigenous comandantes230 was a taller gentleman that called himself Subcomandante Marcos. The media frenzy around these masked indigenous people soon turned their attention to this charismatic spokes person. Everyone wondered, “Who is Marcos?” The Zapatistas responded:

“Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristobal, a gang member in Neza,231 a rocker in the National University, a Jew in Germany, an ombudsman in the Defense Ministry, a communist in the post-Cold War era, an artist without gallery or portfolio..., a pacifist in Bosnia, a housewife alone on Saturday night in any neighborhood in any city in Mexico, a striker in the CTM, a reporter writing filler stories for the

225 Ski masks, hankerchiefs.
226 These kinds of phrases have been commonly used through Latin America in different struggles, protests and other political contexts. In short, they are certainly not unique to the EZLN. However, the Zapatista uprising happened concurrent to our time and youth’s energies. Significantly, Zapatistas utilized the mediums of communication that were pertinent to the youth, like the internet. Zapatistas were also adamant about citing other current and past struggles, dedicated to bringing the memory, focus and commonality among them all as part and parcel to their own struggle.
227 We don’t have to ask permission to be free!
228 “Behind us, we are you!”
229 J.E. Muñoz, Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics. (University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 19.
230 Commanders.
231 A Mexican barrio or neighborhood famous for its poverty and crime a few miles outside of Mexico City.
back pages, a single woman on the subway at 10 pm, a peasant without land, an unemployed worker..., an unhappy student, a dissident amid free market economics, a writer without books or readers, and, of course, a Zapatista in the mountains of southeast Mexico. So Marcos is a human being, any human being, in this world. Marcos is all the exploited, marginalized and oppressed minorities, resisting and saying, ‘Enough’!”

The poetic, yet, politically charged statement reached into the public imagination. Understanding the way they might be read by the media, and in an attempt to engage the world to imagine beyond the masked indigenous subject, the Zapatistas released the above statement. Behind the pasamontañas, Marcos was and could be “any human being in the world.”

By articulating multiple moments and varying global subjects in the midst of difficulty or oppression — the “Palestinian in Israel,” the “gay in San Francisco,” a “black in South Africa” — they connected the common struggle amongst them all: neo-liberalism. Furthermore, by articulating the common oppression through poetic-like prose, the Zapatistas invoked the humanity in all of us. The most important thing behind the mask was the “marginalized, exploited human being in this world.” The Zapatistas made their point by refusing to let the media take control of their message by singling out “the one” person responsible for the uprising. Thus, they concluded their statement with, “¡Todos somos Marcos!”

The world would come to realize that this kind of prose would become a tactic for the Zapatistas. The Zapatistas unapologetically took, and continue to take, to an exploration of subjectivities and discussions on economic and social oppression through multiple dialogues, poetry, encuentros and other social technologies. Furthermore, emphasizing a cosmic view of relationality, the Zapatistas requested an engagement/a dialogue with other struggling communities around the world. They called for people and sites of resistance to come to the table to dialogue without false government language and discourse. With a new language, Zapatistas believed then and now that encuentros are

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234 Ibid.
235 “We are all Marcos!”
236 The Zapatistas held local as well, “intergalactic” meetings or encuentros (encounters) to encourage dialogue for the purpose of building community.
important self-reflexive exercises that engender community building and build critical consciousness.

**Zapatismo at the PRC**

I learned about the Zapatistas through my involvement with the PRC, and in conversation with others in the EastLos **artivista** community. What was initially striking to me was precisely how they would repeatedly use poetry-like expression to communicate their ideas. In retrospect, it was a powerful and unexpected tool. Subjectivity is an embodied and lived reality, and both the conscious and subconscious are oftentimes articulated through creative expression. The creative process often draws out what Bakare-Yusuf articulates as “counter memory” that emerges through tangible modes of expression. Poetry and writing from Anzaldua’s perspective, for example, was an “image-making practice” that can shape and transform what we imagine, what we are able to perceive, and are able to give material embodiment to.

U.S. Third World feminist historian Lisa Lowe emphasizes the importance of culture production:

“This is not to argue that cultural struggle can ever be the exclusive site for practice it is rather to argue that if the state suppresses dissent by governing subjects through rights, citizenship, and political representation, it is only through culture that we conceive and enact new subjects and practices in antagonism to the regulatory locus of the citizen-subject, by way of culture that we can question these modes of government.”

Art and culture production as mediums by which to articulate Chican@ identity and struggles are an important political force in *Movimiento* times. However, art or cultural work was not centralized nor taken as seriously as the “political work.” There is a vast body of work that articulates how Chican@ art is a reflective and important part of instilling political consciousness in communities during *Movimiento* times. Indeed, we can think of public art such as murals, community musicians, songwriters and the quintessential example of *El Teatro Campesino* as an important citation of this kind of

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240 The Chicano social movement of the 1960’s is often referred to as “el Movimiento” or “the movement.”
work.\textsuperscript{241} However, even in \textit{Movimiento} times there was still a predominant sense of the performer/audience divide. \textit{Artivistas} actively sought to introduce new ways of conceiving music as a dialectic tool that disrupts the audience/performer divide and, thus, may challenge a community’s understanding of creative expression solely as commodity.

The Zapatista uprising was an inspiring moment in the Chican@ East L.A art scene for reasons concerning both its methods and tactics. Zapatista tactics were unconventional, filled with compelling questions, and open to possibilities. Reimagining creative expression as a way to dialogue with other struggling communities was revolutionary. Music did not have to be the “soundtrack” to the movement but rather became a movement itself. In this way, you could include others in the process, not just those who kept up with the latest political or theoretical material.

The Zapatista approach also centered community and embodied knowledge through the dialogue they encouraged in \textit{encuentros}, which intrinsically changed our outlook. Rather than conceive of our communities as deprived and lacking in resources, we began to acknowledge and value the relationships and ways of being we already had. An asset-based assessment of our communities changed our perspective, and highlighted the tools we already had but might have been overlooking.

Unique to the Zapatista movement was the degree of intimacy we were able to have with the communities. For some groups, the way in which Marcos in particular seized the camera and took control of media interviews was seen as “marketing rebellion.” Marcos served a as the spokesperson and seized almost every opportunity to speak about the Zapatista struggle. However, the power was never centralized through Marcos. Instead, Zapatista organizing was done through \textit{comandantes} in various regions. Eventually, Chican@ \textit{artivistas} from the PRC had direct contact with the Mayan community of Oventic willing and able to dialogue with us. Flores comments:

“Unlike other indigenous movements we had a direct relationship with the Zapatistas. Not with Marcos but with the direct communities and the local \textit{comandancia}. What you see in the Media with Marcos was not our experience. We chose the Zapatistas because it resonated with our struggle. Their ideas of not taking state power but of building a new world was new to us.”\textsuperscript{242}

\textsuperscript{242} Oral history interview (Los Angeles, CA: April 9, 13).
The EZLN uprising was in part due to prior organizing of indigenous groups across Mexico that took place decades prior to the formal uprising.243

As Gustavo Esteva asserts:

“The Zapatistas are not guerillas. They are not a fish that swims in the sea of the people, as Che Guevara would define a guerilla. They are the sea, not the fish: the uprising was the collective decision of hundreds of communities not interested in power. And they are not a revolutionary group in search of popular support to seize power.”244

In this way, Zapatismo is in essence an “attitude,” a way of being and seeing the world, which has proven to be one of the most important yet challenging traits of the Zapatista movement.

**Independent Study Groups**

Besides the worldwide circulated communiqués that the Zapatistas would publish via the internet, there were also various community members that formed study groups within the community to discuss Zapatista philosophy. One of the most important figures in my learning process was Roberto Gonzalez-Flores. The director of the NCDM, Lydia Brazon was also a strong figure in the study groups but her activities with the NCDM prevented her from participating regularly with this particular community.

In 1996, Gonzalez-Flores was granted a Fulbright Fellowship to study the organizing methods of the Zapatistas, particularly the gendered movement within it. Gonzalez-Flores was an avid reader of the Zapatista philosophy, and formed study groups through the NCDM or independently in his home. He was a natural intellectual and teacher with years of experience as an organizer in the Chican@ movement.245 Gonzalez-Flores lived close to the PRC, and participated in and frequented the shows witnessing

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245 Roberto Gonzalez-Flores, Ph.D has been the most supportive of mentors. A PhD in Education, and he was the first person to publish on the 1997 Encuentro. In his dissertation titled, “Asking, Listening, Learning: The Role of Transnational Informal Learning Networks In the Creation of A Better World,” he focuses on the informal learning networks between Zapatista and Chican@ communities.
and contributing to the energy that repeatedly manifested in the space.\(^{246}\) In this regard, the artivista efforts did not solely revolve around artists or young people. It included an older generation of thinkers and community organizers from previous generations that mentored and continued to contribute to present dialogues and community efforts. Gonzalez-Flores has since published his dissertation on the informal transnational learning networks between the Zapatistas and Chican@s.\(^{247}\)

**Zapatista Gendered Movement**

Through his academic and community work, Gonzalez-Flores examined the gender struggle within the Zapatista uprising. Gender issues were a central part of the Zapatista movement. The adopting of the “Women’s Revolutionary Laws” were an important step within Zapatista communities. Prior to coming out to the world, the women within the movement came out to the men, and demanded basic rights for women within their own cultures. The laws stipulated the right to choices in marriage partner, how many children to have or not have, and to join the army if they so wished. The Zapatista women, as important advocates of indigenous women’s rights, gained international attention with the Women’s Revolutionary Laws.

Various academics and social theorists have coined the gendered social movement participants as “dissident women.”\(^{248}\) They are coined as “dissident” because they defy categorization in multiple discourses. They defy the discourse on indigenous women in government on national and international scales as well as within their own kinship/community discourse. Their multiple strategies have decentered hegemonic “feminist” and “leftists” understandings of what it means to be a woman in the fight for social justice, and instead confront the “relations of domination present at various scales of power.”\(^{249}\) They have also taken to exploring new forms of citizenship, rights and responsibilities, specifically indigenous autonomy and self-determination. The gendered

\(^{246}\) González-Flores was instrumental in forming the Westside Cafè, which has since been renamed to the Eastside Cafè. It is now located in Highland Park, CA.

\(^{247}\) The 1997 Encuentro served in explaining the manner in which González-Flores refers to in his study as the “centrifugal and centripetal learning dimensions or factors” in the transnational learning networks between Chican@s and Zapatist@s.

\(^{248}\) Ibid.

movement within the Zapatista uprising has been crucial to the success of the EZLN. However, despite their international acclaim they are not free of challenges in the interpersonal sphere. The Zapatista women continue to struggle for equality within their own communities.

_Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas_ (2006) is an insightful anthology that demonstrates the various ways in which the indigenous women continue to navigate the multiple systems of power (government, local, kinship). Various authors examine the rise and current struggles, methods and ongoing strategizing that indigenous women are engaged in, in their fight for equal rights. Maylei Blackwell maps how the presence of women’s participation in the EZLN has had a significant impact on various political scales creating a unique form of “differential consciousness.” Blackwell elaborates:

“By weaving in and between local, national, and transnational spaces, indigenous women have forged their own forms of differential consciousness and political subjectivity based on a fusion of experiences and discourses from those multiple locales.”

It is through this awareness of the political subjectivity and the “weaving” among the multiple scales that Chicanas, such as myself, are able to identify with their struggle and with this kind of differential consciousness.

Most significantly, this anthology is successful in challenging static representations of indigenous people and culture as pure, pious and unchanging beings at the mercy of modernity and “progress” in academia, much like they have done in the world. This gendered movement by leading _commandantes_ and _mujeres_ in the Zapatista struggle moved the Chicanas within the community of _artivistas_. Thus, the gendered struggle within the Zapatista movement in conjunction with the use of creative expression to inform the world of their struggles and their desire to connect across borders into other sites of struggle all contributed to inspiring new hope and imagination in the Chican@ _artivista_ mindset.
Building Zapatista Relationships in EastLos

Members of El Frente Zapatista (Javier Eloriaga, third from left), Quetzal and Aztlán Underground in Mexico City.

Mexican activist Javier Eloriaga was the head of the La Frente Zapatista in Mexico City. El Frente Zapatista was the nonclandestine political arm within the Zapatista movement. El Frente was in direct contact with the Zapatistas as they dealt with civil society concerning Zapatista matters. The NCDM informed L.A.’s community of organizers and supporters of the Zapatistas that Eloriaga would engage in a speaking tour to raise money for Comandante Ramona’s medical bills. Besides holding a high rank within the army, Comandante Ramona was an esteemed member of the clandestine army and had fallen ill with cervical cancer. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the PRC produced art shows to raise money for Ramona and the Zapatistas. In one such event, Eloriaga bared witness to the community of artivistas and the level of organization we had achieved. Eloriaga was so impressed with the community that he asked for some of the members to visit Chiapas, Mexico, and propose an Encuentro to the comandancia.

250 The FZLN established civil society dialogue committees, created actions, and informed civil society in general about the Zapatista activities.
Per Eloriaga’s request, in December of 1996, a small contingency embarked on a trip to Chiapas. In attendance were Flores, Jose Ramirez, Gabriel Tenorio, and Roberto Gonzalez-Flores. The trip entailed visiting two different communities, one in Oventic and the other in La Realidad. Flores recalls, “In Oventic, we met with Comandante David, and proposed an encuentro Chicana@ in California. He suggested we do it in Oventic instead, due to the fact that it was the community that was the most organized.” Flores continues, “So we went to La Realidad and we met with [Subcomandante] Marcos and he told us exactly the same thing. Almost word for word.”

While on the 1996 trip to Chiapas, the group was invited to meet Ramona after her kidney surgery. During this meeting, Ramona expressed the same sentiment as her comrades. Ramona’s place of origin was Oventic and she thought it would be the right community for such an encuentro. The small group returned to East L.A. energized and ready to deliver the news. After being informed of the trip and the Comandante’s wishes, some of the previously mentioned artists and groups began to meet once a week at the PRC to plan the possibility of having a cultural encuentro with the Zapatistas. We began to deliberately fortify our relationships with each other in order to have an encuentro that would center on music, art, teatro, and dance as tools of dialogue.

The Big Frente Zapatista (BFZ)

“Chicana art...has responded in greater or lesser measures, to the rise of particular social, economic and political forces. Some of the most salient of these have been the rise of post-industrialist, digital-based, production and distribution systems enabling accelerated, transnational flows of information; the restructuring of business labor; the disempowerment of workers and the growing relocation of unskilled manual labor jobs in manufacturing industries from the United States to the third world and elsewhere, including the Mexican side of the border....”

—Laura E. Pérez

251 La Realidad means “the reality.”
252 The Zapatista communities have been actively recuperating the health of their communities before and since the inception of the EZLN uprising. Their communities like many around the world, have suffered the loss of community members due to migration, alcoholism, poor education, health, and economic infrastructure. Oventic seemed like the right choice due to the fact that it was both Comandante Ramona’s native site and that we had contributed to alleviating her financial struggle due to her health issues. Oral history interview (Los Angeles CA.: March 22, 2012).
The conflation of two words (artist and activist) into artivista activates Laura E. Perez’s recognition of Chicana artists as “intellectuals whose work embodies theories of resistance and visionary ideals of social change.” At this point, we began to use the term more frequently, sometimes interchanging it with Zapartista (Zapatista/Activista/Artista). With everybody’s eye on the Zapatista movement, a call was put out to whoever was interested in planning for an encuentro between Chican@s and Zapatistas. Most of the artists that answered the call were college students between the ages of 18-25 years of age.

The Big Frente Zapatista (BFZ) became the organizing body for the proposed Encuentro. The title of the organizing collective “the Big Frente” was a playful title based on the Mexican organization called La Frente Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional (FZLN). As previously mentioned, La Frente was a civil society organization in support of the E.Z.L.N. As a collective, we had experienced through our own communities how music and art were effective organizing tools. The BFZ soon formulated a call out to the community that read:

“El Big Frente Zapatista invites you to participate in the First Cultural Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalismo. This Encuentro will take place in Chiapas, Mexico, between August 5-10.... The Big Frente is a collective of artists, students, youth, workers, and cultural promoters from various communities and organizations. We work with all those who have been excluded and marginalized by neoliberalism and who have been inspired by the Zapatista movement. We are members of civil society, uniting in the efforts of Zapatismo, not only to support the EZLN in Mexico, but also to actively participate in our own transformation “desde nuestra propia trinchera.” The BFZ is dedicated to promote the work of the EZLN, FZLN, and any other organization working towards the creation of just societies for all humanity. In order to engage in this process we have organized the following Cultural Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalismo.”

This call also included a tentative schedule of activities for the Encuentro. The call was circulated by word of mouth, email and fax.

The planning meetings were scheduled every Sunday for about a year. Meetings were mostly held at Centro Regeneración in Highland Park. There were countless meetings and fundraising events that in retrospect strengthened the alliances between the

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255 Ibid.
256 From our own trenches.
257 Flyer/Fax from Laura Palomares’ personal collection.
groups and artists. As previously mentioned, the informal network consisted of artists working in various mediums and included visual and graffiti artists, spoken word artists, musicians, artisans, poets, and filmmakers. The BFZ also consisted of community organizers that may not have practiced artistic expression but appreciated creative/artistic work and recognized the inherent power in the practice. Among the talented body of community organizers were Laura Palomares, Suyapa Portillo, and Miguel Rodriguez.

The Organizing Process

Although most of the artists were not “formally” trained, we each had the responsibility of facilitating creative ways of engaging group dialogue. We utilized various techniques (according to our artistic disciplines) to build trust among the artivistas and organizers. We agreed to bring to the collective ice breakers or trust exercises from our respective disciplines. The group Chusma, for example, brought in various theater exercises to help build trust and facilitate dialogue. Along with these exercises, we also studied and collectively discussed Zapatista philosophy and communiqués.

After a couple of weeks of meeting regularly, our discussions became more intimate. Sometimes the conversations brought up childhood memories of violence and sexual abuse. Some of the men also spoke up about spousal battery. The instilled trust initiated a kind of sharing that could have been incriminating or shameful for some of the participants. There was, however, the space of forgiveness and a know-how among us that allowed these moments to come up without fear or shame. Through this process, the BFZ came to realize that collectively creating art that required collaborative efforts of production was more than a useful tool to get to know each other.

Stuart Hall states that, “without language meaning could not be exchanged in the world.”258 The BFZ challenged the concept of “language” to apply to collective efforts in culture production. Artistic mediums, such as visual art, music and theatre became effective tools that draw out important “sites of memory” in the body. We found that abstract theories speak to nonlinear sensibilities capable of shifting consciousness and

thus invoking critical change. In this way, *artivistas* expand the boundaries and possibilities of communication and meaning that Hall articulates in terms of language, but that *artivistas* articulate through communal creative interactions.

**Grassroots Fundraising**

Besides the weekly meetings, we also produced concerts and shows to generate funds for the trip. We wanted all who wished to attend the *Encuentro* to be able to, even if they did not have the money to do so. The fundraising was constant. We held concerts and even a “Zapatista run” where the community and families sponsored runners. Some artists designed and sold merchandise. Omar and Jose Ramirez, for example, designed t-shirts that displayed images on the front, and the Zapatista Revolutionary Laws for Women or the *Hymno Zapatista Nacional* in the back.

Having raised enough funds, community organizers Laura Palomares and Suyapa Gris Portillo left two months earlier than the rest of the *Encuentro* participants to make arrangements and to ensure that we had personal contact with Zapatista organizers on the Mexican side of the border. The rest of BFZ members who stayed behind continued to fundraise. During their initial two months, we needed to provide food and lodging for Palomares and Portillo, and to pay for the cost of food for *Encuentro* participants. These
funds had to be given to the Zapatistas ahead of time so that they could purchase the food from their own networks and communities. The recycling of money within the communities was important to the overall Zapatista emphasis on autonomy throughout the region. In the end, the localized trust and cohesion built through organizing the Encuentro through event organizing, trust exercises and extensive discussion allowed us to move on to a successful translocal dialogue with the Zapatistas. On August 5\textsuperscript{th}, 1997, one hundred and twenty-seven Chican@ artivistas mostly from the Los Angeles area set out for Chiapas, Mexico, to partake in the Encuentro Cultural Chicano/Indígena Por La Humanidad y Contra El Neoliberalismo.\textsuperscript{259}

“La Neza”

Before arriving in Oventic we made a stop in Mexico City for a couple of days. The BFZ was scattered among different hotels and hostels in different parts of the city. Before the big Encuentro in Chiapas, we had planned mini encuentros with Zapatista supporters and artist collectives in Mexico City who were also part of La Frente. We raised money for an autonomous school in Nezahuacoyotl, a neighborhood also known as “La Neza.”\textsuperscript{260} Barrio Neza was mostly infamous for its crime and violence. We had been in contact with the organizers of a Zapatista-inspired school in the region. Quetzal along with Aztlan Underground and Chusma were invited for their inauguration. The trip into La Neza was for the purpose of delivering the money to the school and to play for the inauguration.

On the morning of our trip into La Neza, a group of us were assaulted on the subway system near Bellas Artes. Gabriel Tenorio and Dante Pascuzzo’s personal money and passports were taken. Jose Q. Flores was stabbed on the right side of his rib cage, and he was taken into La Cruz Roja\textsuperscript{261} where he was stitched up. Flores was released that same afternoon and insisted that we continue our journey into barrio Neza. I thought he was crazy, but we figured the worst had happened and proceeded to make our way.

\textsuperscript{259} The encuentro also consisted of Chican@ participants from San Diego and Long Beach, and from parts of Texas.

\textsuperscript{260} La Néza was an unincorporated squat town with over a million immigrant dwellers from other parts of the Mexican republic who where there seeking employment and better opportunities.

\textsuperscript{261} Mexican federal health facility.
The trip into La Neza would be difficult since there were no taxis that would take us to that part of the city. The barrio was infamous for its assaults and violence, and taxi drivers would not entertain the idea. When we managed to stop a Taxista or taxi driver, once they learned where we were headed, they would immediately respond, “No. Yo no voy pa-ya!” and race off.262

One taxista finally took a moment to say, “why would you all want to go there?” Do you know how dangerous it is?” The taxista then explained to us that even if we were to get into La Neza we would have a difficult time getting out since no taxista in their right mind would be caught dead in that part of the city after dark. We offered more money and asked if he could take us and bring us back. He agreed on one condition. On his return to pick us up he would drive by the school. If we were not outside with our instruments and ready to go at the exact time we agreed, he would drive off and we would be left to find a place to stay overnight. We agreed, paid him half our agreed amount and began our journey into barrio Neza.

In tow representing Quetzal were Flores, Tylana Enomoto, Dante Pascuzzo, Danilo Torres and myself. Every group made their way into barrio Neza on their own. Our band had an adventurous ride into the barrio. Taxistas in Mexico are skilled and aggressive drivers. I closed my eyes and prayed that we would all be safe. On the drive in, Tylana Enomoto recalls the fires on the street corners and the tattered homes and squats.263 As we moved deeper into La Neza, the degree of poverty was not only visually present, but there was also a desperate energy. However, when we arrived at the school the dynamic changed.

We made it to the concert and dialogued with the founders of the school and community members, who shared with us their struggles and how they managed to build their school. It was impressive and inspiring. The time came for us to leave and we waited outside the school with our bags and instruments fifteen minutes before our agreed time. The celebration had not officially ended. There was a hustle of women and children of all ages, the smell of food and music blaring from the inside of the school. Nuke and other graffiti artists from our group were tagging up the outside facade.

262 I don’t go there!
As we waited outside, like clockwork, the *taxista* drove by once and identified us. He then circled around and stopped. When he got out of his vehicle, he looked around and asked, “*Qué está pasando aquí?*” We explained what the commotion was about and he was impressed and never imagined something like this could go on in a place like Neza. He took a moment to enjoy the scenery and felt comfortable enough to go inside to use the restroom.

We loaded the Bug and stepped in. He informed us that he was going to make it out as quickly as possible, and so he asked us all to duck out of view. Being that his car was marked as a taxi made him a target, but a taxi with passengers in tow made him an even *bigger* target. He wanted to appear as if he had no passengers and thus diminish the risk of being held up. We took his advice and hunched over and laid on each other. The *taxista* then began his skillful maneuvers back into the big part of the city.

The taxi driver ran red lights when he could, barely slowing down for fear of being ambushed. Although this sounds dangerous, he had a way of making you feel safe. He was funny and talked about his life and the hustle of the city. He had been held up various times on the job and told us about all his adventures and close calls. We talked the whole way back. Thanks to him we arrived quickly and safely. We thanked him for his help, and paid him the rest of the money. We must have struck a chord with him because he asked us what we were up to next. We said that we were off to Chiapas the next day, and he offered to take us to the bus station. The next morning, he was waiting for us leaning on his VW Bug sipping coffee. We loaded up and he took us to La Tapo.\textsuperscript{264}

\textit{Encuentro Chichan@ Indigena Para La Humanidad y Contra El Neoliberalismo}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{identification}
\caption{Identification for the Encuentro Cultural Chican@ Indigena por la Humanidad y Contra el Neoliberalismo (Author’s personal collection, 1997).}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{264} \textit{La Tápo} is the central bus station in Mexico City.
Too much time has gone by and the taxista’s name escapes me now. He, like many people in Mexico City, was curious about us. Quetzal members were a racially mixed group, and we stood out everywhere we went. Dante Pascuzzo is Italian American, Tylana Enomoto is of Japanese and Thailand descent, Danilo Torres is half-Nicaraguan and half-Mexican. The only group members of Mexican decent were Gabriel Tenorio, Jose Q. Flores and I. However, once we opened our mouths to speak we were clearly identified as Chican@s. Our pocho Spanish as well as our way of dressing were a dead giveaway.

Having been assaulted and his passport stolen, Pascuzzo decided not to continue the trip into Chiapas. My youngest sister Karla, who was with us, also decided to go home after the two days in D.F. Those of us left from the group were Enomoto, Torres, Tenorio, Flores and I. There were so many of us who were making our way into Chiapas that we chartered a bus. It was a long and windy eight hour trip into San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Most everyone on it was BFZ contingency.

In preparation for our trip, we were warned not to say we were heading to Chiapas for the Encuentro. Commiserating with a “rebel army” on Mexican soil was, after all, a crime. We were instructed by Portillo and Palomares that we should say we were there as “eco-tourists.” This answer came in handy for the federales or police, who asked us repeatedly on the way to Chiapas as our bus would get stopped, and some of the women and men would be asked off the bus for questioning.

Once we arrived in San Cristóbal, we spent a day preparing and acquiring our credenciales or credentials. We needed our credenciales as issued by the Zapatistas, in order to step foot onto the autonomous community of Oventic. We also took this time to meet other BFZ members to discuss last minute preparations. Walking through the streets of San Cristobal, we would repeatedly bump into BFZ members or other Chican@s from Los Angeles, San Diego, or Long Beach.

Some of the stores or restaurants would blare their radios. Many were tuned to local or clandestine radio stations. As we were having dinner the night before we were to travel into Oventic, we heard a radio announcer say, “Le damos la bienvenida a Los Chicanos de Los Ángeles que vienen al Primer Encuentro Cultural Chicano/Indígena

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265 National police.
Por la Humanidad y Contra El Neoliberalismo!”

We smiled and sat at the table trying to look inconspicuous. The following day at dawn, a chartered bus filled with BFZ members took the final trip into Oventic, Aguascalientes II. It was August 5, 1997.

“Nos Encontramos”

Welcome banner created by the Zapatistas, displayed outside Oventic. (Laura Palomares’s personal collection).

We arrived into Oventic a bit after sunrise. Comandante David greeted us. Once we unloaded the bus, our bags were searched by the comandantes. They needed to make sure that we were not carrying arms, alcohol or drugs. Alcohol and drugs were strictly prohibited in Zapatista communities and we were asked to respect their laws. Once we were all searched. We were greeted by the community of masked Zapatistas who lined up on the side of the road in a Soul Train-like formation. As we walked down to the cancha, they clapped and yelled, “¡Bienvenidos!” Many Chican@s from our group cried, overtaken with emotion. We danced all the way down or jumped and clapped along. It was an amazing moment.

When we reached the bottom of the cancha, there was a small marimba band of masked Zapatista musicians who were playing porra-like tunes. The Zapatistas outnumbered us as they filled the stadium seating. At least a thousand indigenous people

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266 “We welcome the Chicanos from Los Angeles whom are here for the Cultural Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism!”

267 Tzotzil for “place where people meet.”

268 “We have found each other” is a phrase that the Zapatistas repeatedly used in their communiqués in reference to the many communities around the world who offered their support. The BFZ used this term for one of the five encuentro themes. “Nos Encontramos” was the first Encuentro day.

269 Athletic court. This cancha was a basketball court.

270 A porra is a cheer.
were in attendance. Once comandante David and Tacho publicly greeted us, we were directed into our cabins, settled in and set to work.

The format of the Encuentro had been previously discussed and outlined with the Zapatistas. We agreed that the days would each have a theme or a dicho. The dialogue tables would revolve around the theme of the day or the dichos themselves. After the dialogue tables or las mesas de dialogo, which took place first thing after breakfast, we would have lunch together which was prepared by the Zapatista women. After lunch, we would break off into talleres or workshops.

**Day One of the Encuentro**

The first day was called “Nos Encontramos” or “We have found each other.” The idea for the first day was precisely as the titled indicates. The goal was to find out who everyone was, and what led us to the Encuentro. The process of getting to know each other was slow. The Zapatistas are not a homogenous group. There are various communities and languages in Mayan culture. Some of the groups and languages spoken at the Encuentro were Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, and Nan among others. The translation from these languages into Castellano or Spanish was a tedious process. However, we were invested and dedicated to being present to each other and to learning about our realities, struggles and ways of life. I believe that whatever was lost in translation was partly recovered in the creative process.

**The Creative Process**

After las mesas de dialogo, we set to work on creative expression pieces. We worked in different mediums to create culture productions based on the morning discussions. The goal was to collectively produce something to be able to share with others at the end of the day, if you so wished. Encuentro participants could choose workshops in teatro, poetry, music, graffiti/mural painting and dance that were being conducted by artivistas.

Janelle Gonzales and I were in charge of the dance workshops. On certain days, I was also able to participate in the music workshops. Chusma members such as Alberto Ibarra, Marisol Torres, Danny Torres, and Richard Montoya of Culture Clash ran the
teatro workshops. Felicia Montes, Liza Hita, and Cristina Gorosica conducted the poetry workshops. Nuke, Omar Ramirez, Arnoldo “Zeta” and Rachael Vélez Thorson were in charge of the mural painting workshops. And finally, Rosa Marta Zarate, Jose Q. Flores, Gabriel Tenorio, and Claudia Gonzalez conducted the music workshops. Additional members of the BFZ floated around to different workshops depending on where they were needed the most. Yaolt, Joe “Peps” Galarza and D.J. Bean from Aztlán Underground were among the multi-talented musicians and artists who were able to partake in more than one medium. Laura Palomares and Suyapa Portillo floated around making sure we stayed on schedule.

**Teatro Workshops**

Teatro workshop participants performing their theater piece for the community (author’s personal collection).

The teatro presentations produced multi-act plays that were powerful and informative moments on all days, particularly on the day that we discussed la mujer. These teatro workshops revolved around indigenous women’s health, and the abuse of power by government doctors and clinics. The morning dialogues informed the creative process, and the plays mirrored the testimonios and discussions that took place at the dialogue tables.
One particular one-act play portrayed the perils of an indigenous woman trying to seek medical attention in the city. Directed by members of Chusma, the play had a rascuache like feel.\textsuperscript{271} The doctor was played by Culture Clash member Richard Montoya, who was wearing a vaudeville-like half-mask. Montoya was animated and loud in his portrayal of the money hungry government doctor. A Zapatista woman played herself.

The act began with an indigenous woman walking into a town clinic seeking help for discomfort in her abdomen. Her accompanying male partner communicates to the doctor in Castellano\textsuperscript{272} that his wife is in pain. The doctor, being nervous and erratic because there are indigenous people in his office, quickly issues her contraceptives and ushers them out. The scene continues to show other indigenous women coming in and complaining of various ailments but repeatedly being sent out of the office with contraceptives in hand. In the end, the first indigena woman’s pain becomes so severe that she gives birth to a healthy strong Zapatista baby in the doctor’s clinic. Upon hearing the news, the evil government doctor runs out in the middle of the cancha and drops dead of a heart attack. The stadium of indigenas cheered as the Zapatista women and their partners board the imaginary bus and playfully run over him as the scene concludes. The audience laughed at the many jokes and slap-stick antics. The acts always ended on a positive note and with powerful resolutions.

Alberto Ibarra, Danny and Marisol Torres were gentle leaders in the workshops and had a way of bringing out the best in people. The plays reflected many perils that indigenous woman experienced in the city. Government clinics are not concerned with the health of indigenous women, and good quality care is either hard to find or absent. If indigenas receive care at all, it is with reluctance and indifference, and they are repeatedly prescribed contraceptives regardless of their ailments. The message communicated is a desire to end or prevent “their kind.” As Chican@s in the U.S., we could relate to this indifference and many of their experiences. We began to think of the many ways our relationship with the U.S. healthcare system and its doctors were strikingly familiar.

\textsuperscript{271} Chusma follows a long trajectory of Chicano teatro specializing in rascuáche aesthetic.
\textsuperscript{272} The Zapatistas referred to the Spanish language as Castellán.
The process of writing song lyrics is a tedious task. After discussing ideas in the dialogue sessions or *mesas*, and we set about creating music based on the discussions. *Nos Encontramos* was the topic of the day and we had spent an hour composing lyrical ideas. The *cabaña* was filled with chatter as the participants were attempting to come up with the next line to the composition. It was chaotic as the plethora of languages filled the room: Chican@s speaking English and broken Spanish, Zapatistas speaking Castellano, Tzotzil, Tzetzal and Tojolabal, and Mexican observers speaking Spanish and broken English. However, we had Rosa Marta Zarate on our side.

Rosa Marta Zarate is a former nun who was invited by the Zapatista women to participate in the *Encuentro*. Zarate had established her own relationship with the communities by supporting the cooperatives of *artesanos*. Zarate was also a talented singer and guitar player. Zarate facilitated the songwriting workshops, along with Flores and Tenorio. Zarate was an effective leader as she encouraged and moderated the various silences and outbursts of ideas in the midst of creative energy. The workshop was filled with masked indigenous people and Chican@s that focused their attention towards a poster board mounted on the wall of the *cabaña*. Flores, Tenorio and Enomoto worked along with the community and Zarate in the composition of music and melodies.

Zarate had a comedic way of diffusing opposing ideas on wording and phrasing. Every time we came to a consensus by a showing of hands, she would affirm our
collective visions by writing the final lyric on the poster board. Soon, we had completed
our song and titled it “El Grito de Alegria.”

Various Zapatista men and women voiced the style or genre of music they wanted
the composition to be in. Some suggested a corrido.\textsuperscript{273} The corrido was an informative
and useful way of documenting this moment, but other Zapatistas felt our song should be
more festive and danceable. Even though Chican@s wanted a little hip hop feel, in the
end, the group decided to make the first day’s song a Cumbia.

Quetzal later recorded this song on our debut album that was released a year later.
“El Grito de Alegria” has since been played in venues all over the U.S., Mexico, Japan
and Canada. Some of the lyrics read:

\begin{quote}
El pueblo con paso lento va ganando la lucha
La tristeza que hoy llevamos será un grito de alegria.

El gobierno manipula encarcela y asesina,
Nosotros los Zapatistas romperemos las cadenas.

Zapatistas somos todos y luchamos por la tierra.
Dignidad, paz y justicia, libertad son nuestras metas.

Si nos robaron la tierra, si nos quitaron el pan,
El pueblo que marcha unido, lograra la libertad.
¡El pueblo que marcha unido vencerá!
\end{quote}

The contents of the song reflect the day’s discussion. We discussed our histories,
and all the struggles that our ancestors and people had been through. Our respective
histories of colonization, war, disease, enslavement and the loss of ancestral lands were
common struggles among us. The song, however, takes a hopeful stance. “El Grito de
Alegria” is a rearticulation of the common phrase, “the cry of war.” Amid the struggle,
“El Grito de Alegria” was “the cry of happiness,” a celebration of the present, the
process and the hope that we felt in each other’s presence. Hope is after all an
“ontological need.”\textsuperscript{274} As Chican@s, we were there in solidarity with the Zapatistas to

\textsuperscript{273} One of the many Mexican song forms that have served as a historical document by way of a sung oral tradition.
\textsuperscript{274} P. Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (New York: Continuum, 1999), 8.
dialogue and to fortify our own communities. Together, we created songs to commemorate this moment, but also as a way of producing community knowledge.

**Conflict and Citation Through Creative Expression**

We were committed to utilizing art and creative expression as tools of dialogue. That is, through art and creative expression we continued the dialogue that we started in the *mesas*. For the most part, both the *mesas* and the creative work fostered a space to share one’s *testimonios* and experiences that intrinsically made us a community and led us into critical consciousness. In this way, it was inevitable for discussions on race, class, nation and sexuality to arise in the dialogue and creative process. Disagreements and conflicts were also inevitable.

On the *día de La Mujer*, a conflict erupted during the mural workshop that generated important discussions among participants. I was assigned to the music and songwriting workshop on this day. However, I needed to relieve myself, so I began the long walk down to the outhouses. Oventic is in a small valley that leads down to a river between two steep mountains that were covered with flowering cornstalks. Every walk down to the bathroom meant a steep walk back up to the different *talleres*. As I made my
walk back up to the music workshop, I could see the mural participants at the top of the community. I decided to take a detour to see what the muralists were up to.

Everything seemed to be going smoothly. The side wall of Oventic’s community hall was prepped and they were ready to paint. There was no apprehension on the part of Mayan woman who went to task on the mural. The Mayan women in Chiapas engage in creative expression on a daily basis. For example, they take great pride in the making of their clothing. It is a coming of age task and ritual for young women to weave and embroider a *capa* (cape). In making their *capas*, they create unique flower motifs that will more than likely identify them for the rest of their womanhood. This ritual is what Judith Butler terms sex performativity, and the “reiterative and citational practice” in the embroidery of flowers culminates in womanhood for Mayan women. They perceive flowers as a symbol of femininity and use flower motifs to decorate their clothing. Flowers were the first things that the Mayan women began to draw on the mural on the *día de la Mujer*.

Since this was an *encuentro* between Chican@s and *Indígenas*, observers — many who were Mexican nationals, Spanish Europeans and Australians — were generally conscientious about not interfering in the dialogue. However, during the mural workshop, two women from Spain urged a Mayan participant to paint the sign of Venus on the mural wall. Insisting, they began to guide the Mayan woman’s hand to the wall to draw the symbol. Using a Mayan woman’s hand, they managed to place the sign of Venus onto the mural. Meanwhile, Chicanas painted their interpretations of “woman” drawing moons and cornstalks but never once attempt to impose their ideas and images of womanhood on Mayan participants. Although Mayan participants did not have a problem with the Spanish women’s symbols, the Chicana mural participants were furious about the audacity and imposition. In response, Chicanas and Chicanos approached the European women and asked that they not interfere.

Sex performativity varies from culture to culture. When varying performativities come together in encounters such as these, versions of what ‘sex’ is can clash, inform or influence others. As Judith Butler states, “performativity must be understood not as a

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singular or deliberate ‘act’ but, rather as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names.” I acknowledge the difference between “sex” and “gender” but choose to speak of gender representation in this conflict as “sex performativity.” The symbols chosen by Mayan participants to represent “la mujer” was a “citational practice” particular to Mayan culture. The flower motifs made reference to the biological. For the Spanish women, the sign of Venus was apparently what they had chosen.

When confronted by the Chican@ participants for imposing their symbols, the Spanish observers felt unwelcomed and attacked. They felt that creative expression constituted a sharing of ideas, views and influences, and saw no problem in sharing their symbols with the Mayan participants. However, what was important to Chican@s was to be present, without interrupting anyone’s expression. The idea was not to convert but rather to dialogue. The Chican@s were suddenly demonized by the Spanish women for not being “in the spirit” of the Encuentro. The discussions that ensued revolved around competing notions of ‘woman’ symbolism, race, colonization and privilege. The Spanish women felt entitled, the Chican@s felt transgressed, and the indigena women felt indifferent as they were not necessarily bothered by the request and felt unthreatened by the Spanish women’s gesture.

However, for the Chican@s, their histories and understanding of their own struggles in the U.S, white privilege, and a history rooted in colonization came to the surface: Why had the women interfered in a conversation that was not about them? By the same token, if this gesture did not bother the Mayan women, why did the Chican@s feel the need to speak up? Did the Chican@s feel the need to “protect” the Mayan women from the Spanish? Was there a sort of historical trauma coming to a head? The answers are not as relevant to the situation as much as the questions themselves. The conflicts during a moment of collective creative expression generated a fruitful discussion that is best articulated through an intersectional lens. Regardless, issues of race, class, nationality and privilege are all embedded in the conflict that was generated through collective creative expression.

276 Butler, Bodies That Matter: On The Discursive Limits of “Sex,” 2.
277 Womanhood and nature are often compared in Mayan culture.
Through this example, I am attempting to convey how convening through art for the purpose of social change plays out “theory in the flesh.” Similarly, in academia intersectionality is a tool for reflection on social realities. Like art, or creative expression, intersectionality requires a personal introspection and a look at specificity that positivist traditions discourage. In this sense, intersectionality is, in effect, a creative analytic tool that has the ability to cut through institutional thought and structures embedded in positivist disciplines and laws, highlighting their blind spots. Legal scholar Kimberly Crenshaw repeatedly addressed intersectionality as an important tool, not for some grand “totalizing theory of identity” but rather as an attempt to account for what Crenshaw refers to as the “multiple grounds of identity.” Art and creative expression highlight embodied knowledge, which can also bring about the “multiple grounds of identity” and how they are shaped, negotiated and exist amid, economic, political, and cultural worlds.

Revisiting the conflict at the Encuentro, I agree with Butler when she states that there are no essential norms or laws of sex. Yet, at this stage in the neo-colonial game, the kinds of performativity we engage in is loaded with power. That being said, which bodies mattered in the conflict? Which bodies imposed their symbols to be cited above all others? Who has the power to be cited and who was being excluded by this act? Had the Spanish women considered the specificity of place, they may have realized we were in the mountains of Chiapas in solidarity with the Zapatista struggle for cultural survival. We were in the mountains distanced from all that represented colonialism such as the city, industrialization and endangerment of indigenous culture. In this particular space and time of creation, notions of “universal sisterhood” were questioned and dispelled. A relational view of each other did not mean overlooking or citing one another’s symbols, it meant bearing witness to each other’s expressions.

In the end, the Spanish women took their complaint against the Chican@sters to the comandancia who listened to both sides of the conflict. The comandancia asked if the

280 Ibid.
Spanish women had understood that this was a Chican@ and Indigenous Encuentro? The Spanish women asserted that “art” had to be an all-inclusive expression. In their view, they were not interrupting a dialogue but rather contributing to a piece of “art.” The comandancia then asserted that the creative expression was also a part of the dialogue, and invited the Spanish women to leave if they did not wish to abide by the Encuentro arrangements. Because Portillo, Palomares and the Chican@ muralists refused to issue an apology to the Spanish women, they packed their bags and left the following morning. Brought about through creative expression, this conflict inspired a discussion regarding race, class, gender and the history of colonialism. They were important points of discussion that took place in the creative moment and well after the Spanish women departed.

**Indigenous Pedagogy and Chican@ Artivista Praxis**

“We could not be without being in relationship with everything that surrounds us and is within us. Our reality, our ontology is the relationships.”

“The land is paramount for all indigenous societies. Their relationship to that land, their experience on that land shapes everything that is around them....[L]and is another word for place, environment, your reality, the space you’re in.”

—Shawn Wilson

Relationality through artistic creative processes was a central Encuentro praxis. As a result of the Encuentro experience, embodied practices and creative expression as the critical tools of dialogue became centered in artivista community building praxis. Through a consciousness whose ultimate goal is to be accountable to one’s community and in order to build community, music and art became more than an individual’s expression, but rather a differential tool by which to engage a social movement and liberatory consciousness.

**My position as Artivista Researcher**

Although I was not a formal researcher at the time of the Encuentro nor in my early years as a member of this community, at present I consider myself an indigenous researcher and observing participant in Chican@ artivista community efforts. Indigenous scholars Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Shawn Wilson have contributed their indigenous research methodologies with academia. The analytical tools that Wilson and Smith offer are important to consider, for it is easy to fall into a colonialist framework even when speaking as an ‘insider.’ More importantly, through this deconstruction, Smith articulates an indigenous worldview. Through their work, I continue to explore the concept and importance of relationality in my own project.

Chican@ artivistas engage in art practices in accordance with the cosmic view of relationality. As Wilson states, in the above passage “our ontology is the relationships.”

The Encuentro clearly demonstrates how relationship building through artistic expression was central. Both Smith and Wilson advanced how we view research by stressing the importance of relationships and accountability in the researcher and the research process. Research, its foundation in colonialism, and the practice that upholds its early beginnings is ethically troublesome. It is a troubled process for the researcher, the subject and the manner and language in which the researcher is encouraged to communicate the “knowledge” he/she “produces.” The process is itself a micro-colonialist act as “knowledge” is something that is conceived to be “discovered, extracted, appropriated and distributed.” The subject of research is left exploited and is represented in a manner that is inaccurate but with little recourse to refute.

As Smith asserts, “research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized.” The academy is the “knowledge” engine for capitalism. Educational institutions are encouraged to uphold capitalist interest, and in turn are rewarded through financial endorsement. Based on this model, individuality is encouraged, rewarded and firmly institutionalized. When members of the academy (e.g., faculty, teaching assistants) challenge these interests, they are disciplined and punished through cutbacks or displacement. As Smith argues,

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286 L.T. Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, 58.
287 Ibid., 7.
research is the method in academia that upholds capitalist paradigms,” which has been upheld for centuries by a carefully devised structural framework, and checks and balances within the academy.  

Thus, Smith’s intellectual project is a call to researchers to consider how we can be more reflexive in our research methods and how the research that we conduct might be done in a way that is directly beneficial to the communities we work with. Positivist Western values seek to primarily measure and codify. Under the guise of objectivity, the individual researcher, communities, space, time and knowledge are based on a colonial relationship in practice. In this sense there is little to no accountability. What is most expected of the researcher is his/her distance from the ‘object’ of study.

Wilson extends Smith’s analysis by articulating a process acquiring various ontological perspectives on indigeneity and threading common perspectives among them. Wilson, being from the Cree nation, explores Canadian and Australian indigenous ontologies. In his latest book titled, Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods (2008), Wilson comes to find that relationality and even geometric shapes like the circle are a common thread amongst many indigenous peoples’ belief systems. In reference to the circle, he states, “It’s egalitarian, it’s relational, it’s a structure that supports an inclusion, a wholeness.” The circle also coincides with the idea of relationality. Wilson continues:

“Right or wrong; validity; statistically significant; worthy or unworthy: value judgments lose their meaning. What is more important and meaningful is fulfilling a role and obligations in the research relationship — that is being accountable to your relations.”

Indigenous pedagogy extends a relational view of the self as part and parcel to many other relationships — human and cosmic. Thus, the building of egalitarian relationships is what is most important. The Zapatistas’ call to dialogue with other struggling communities around the globe imparts a similar philosophy. Through 21st century tools, they communicate indigenous relationality via the internet and other forms of social

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288 L. T. Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (1999),
290 Wilson, Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods, 92.
291 Ibid., 77.
media. This has been quite effective as many communities have responded with great enthusiasm to join the dialogue and to engage in similar processes in their own trenches.

**Conclusion**

“So, I mark this as a beginning, but it is a beginning that affirms a profound term that Maldonado Torres has called the “decolonial turn.” The questions proliferate at this time and the answers are difficult. They require placing again, an emphasis on methodologies that work with our lives, so the sense of responsibility is maximal. How do we learn about each other? How do we do it without harming each other but with the courage to take up a weaving of the everyday that may reveal deep betrayals? How do we cross without taking over? With whom do we do this work? The theoretical here is immediately practical....How do we practice with each other engaging in dialogue at the colonial difference? How do we know when we are doing it?”

—Maria Lugones

As I have shown, through dialogue with translocal Mayan communities, *artivistas* informed by a relational view of the world utilize the tools of art and culture as the methodologies that Maria Lugones desires and wonders about in the above passage. The process of creative expression as dialectic tools are powerful ways to reach these fundamental questions.

As a participant observer in the 1997 *Encuentro*, I witnessed how conviviality became an important language to speak in the neo-liberal age, or as Lugones states in “the decolonial turn.” The process of collective artistry during the 1997 *Encuentro* helped participants (Chican@, Spanish, and Mayans) draw out and encounter multiple subjectivities. Through artistic processes, our differences were highlighted and deconstructed, while existing in multiple and intersectional ways in our daily lives. *Encuentro* participants produced multiple multimedia works that were not for profit nor competition amongst participants. Painting a collective mural or wirting communal song along with other works produced through artistic conviviality during this *Encuentro* fostered interactions and conflicts that gave way to discussions. The negotiation of multiple grounds of identity were key in articulating the importance of not ignoring nor attempting to theorize that our differences were insignificant, or that one was more

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293 Ibid.
important than the other, but rather we began to collectively imagine “a world where many worlds could exist.”

The moments of *convivencia* were in essence excavating ways that have long ceased to be relevant or had been damaged in the neo-liberal world. Beginning with colonization and well into the promises of modernity, human life has been slowly stripped of creative communal interactions, such as collective songwriting and other forms of participatory creative expression. Except within families, there are very few communal creative efforts free of ties to nation-state agendas. Most often, autonomous community efforts are unimaginable in the “first world.” However, the work that was produced during the *Encuentro* must also be seen as a valuable archive of these important processes, a product of the processes that can stand to be shared with others.

Upon witnessing creative expression as a convivial tool, one is inevitably led to question capital market arrangements of one’s own creative expression and in relation to one’s community. With an emphasis on process, the 1997 *Encuentro* generated a deep reflection on the status of creative expression in our lives, and gave way to an even bigger question: how to engage more people in collective creative expression, especially in our own trenches. This has become the focus of my intellectual work. In this way an arena of hope opened up, a hope that came with a clear genesis and praxis and that allows an active imagination. I suggest that, ultimately, experiencing *convivencia* or the praxis of conviviality through music, art, poetry and teatro in this *Encuentro* was a step toward building both individual and collective critical consciousness.

Again, love was an important motivating factor in these processes. Many social scholars have identified “[l]ove as an important source of empowerment” for social activists. Chicana feminist theorist Chela Sandoval also discusses at great length the hermeneutics of love as a “set of practices and procedures” that can transit all subjects. She identifies love as something that can break through “whatever controls” to find an “understanding and community.” Much like love, creative expression, especially when exercised in community, is something that can “puncture” through

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295 hooks as quoted by C. Sandoval in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 140.
narratives that “tie us to social time and space, to the descriptions, recital and plots that
dull and order our senses insofar as such social narratives are tied to the law.”298 In this
historic Encuentro between Chican@’s and Zapatistas, art and creative expression
transcended the law of narratives. Combined with “risk and courage” we began to
imagine that love could “make anything possible.”299

298 Ibid., 140.
299 Ibid., 140.
“Aesthetic” refers not to culturally and historically specific elitist European and Euroamerican values in narrowly defined notions of taste or beauty but, more generally, to the conceptual and formal systems governing the material expression of the activity within societies that we refer to as artmaking.  

—Laura E. Pérez

A thick fog engulfed the cold morning in Veracruz, Mexico, and men of all ages arrived from the southern and northern part of the state. It was December of 2003, and what started as parallel communities developing social movement through music and art flourished into a translocal dialogue that urged formal recognition on this gloomy day. Holding worn wooden instruments, farmers, luthiers, butchers and taxi drivers by trade huddled in a small café in central Xalapa to discuss their futures in music via local and translocal community. Chican@ musicians from California were already present and

301 Capital of the state of Veracruz.
anxiously waiting for their Jarocho friends to arrive.\textsuperscript{302} I was one of two Chicanas present along with a few Jarochas in attendance. It was the PrimerEncuentroChicano Jarocho and, after a long and informal relationship between the two communities, we met this day to officially name the translocal dialogue: Fandango sin fronteras (Fandango without borders).

\textit{Fandango} is a participatory, transgenerational music, poetry and dance practice native to the state of Veracruz, Mexico. The efforts made by the Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero\textsuperscript{303} and their reinstatement of fandango, in particular, had moved Chican@ artivista musicians to recognize the inherent social power in this participatory practice. By the late 90’s, there was a series of efforts underway to connect U.S.-based Mexican@ and Chican@ communities to the fandango practice. The encuentro in Xalapa put a name to the many efforts that had been in the works and those that developed as a result of this important dialogue.

In this chapter, I will explore the community of efforts that I refer to as “\textit{fandango sin fronteras}” (fandango without borders) or the translocal U.S./Mexican fandango community. Engaging the literature of performance studies, transculturation and critical indigenous pedagogy, I will demonstrate the many liberatory veins in the enactment of fandango jarocho and how this practice has been used as an organizing tool by Chican@ artivista communities in Los Angeles, California, and Seattle, Washington, as well as in other spaces by Mexican@/Chican@ and Latin@ communities in the United States.

In addition, I will also introduce convivencia as an aesthetic. I suggest that a central aesthetic principle in fandango is the enactment of convivencia. I will refer to “aesthetic” as Laura E. Pérez does in describing Chican@ art in the opening quote of this chapter, and suggest that convivencia is precisely the “formal system governing the material expression” of fandango. I will recount how fandango practice succeeded in redefining music conception, not only for me but also for an evergrowing number of practitioners in the U.S. and Mexico. Fandango practice intrinsically articulates the importance of convivencia in the music making process independent of capitalist ventures. In addition, fandango praxis and the community it inherently builds generates discussions

\textsuperscript{302} Rooted in Indigenous, African, and Spanish cultures, Jarocho is the music/culture of the southern part of the state of Veracruz, Mexico.

\textsuperscript{303} The New Jarana Movement. A jarana is a small eight-string instrument central to fandango practice.
among practitioners that almost always enable a critical consciousness. For all of these reasons, I suggest that *fandango* as a social tool has become the language utilized across borders between Chican@ *artivista* communities and musicians in the U.S. and *fandango* practitioners in Mexico. I begin with how I came to experience this important practice, and how it steadily changed what I thought I knew about the “power of music.”

**Quetzal after the 1997 Encuentro**

Upon returning from the 1997 Zapatista *Encuentro*, *Quetzal* continued to play in Los Angeles and throughout the state of California. The events we participated in revolved around sharing our experience of the Zapatista *Encuentro* as well as continuing to foster the network of musicians and artists in L.A.’s Eastside community. The year was 1998, and upon returning from this life-changing trip, most of the Chican@ *artivista* work revolved around Zapatista philosophy and teachings. We took the Zapatista’s advice of “helping ourselves” and consistently found ways to engage our community as much as we could through music concerts and other public events. As a musical group, *Quetzal* remained active in local community events but also began to branch out professionally.³⁰⁴

Our music was developing professionally, but we remained tapped into community struggles. Our local community relationships and the Zapatista struggle had changed our worldview. In 1998, we recorded our self-titled debut album produced by John Avila on Son Del Barrio Records,³⁰⁵ and a second album in 2001 entitled “Sing the Real” produced by Greg Landau with Vanguard Records.³⁰⁶ Shortly thereafter, we released our third album, “Worksongs” produced by Steve Berlin in 2003.³⁰⁷ Within the span of the three albums, we toured all over the U.S., Canada, Japan, Mexico and Moscow.

The content and sound of our music were reflective of our experiences and

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³⁰⁴ Although we were always vigilant that our musicianship be at its best, here I mean “professional” in that we began to actively entertain a career in the formal music industry.

³⁰⁵ Gina Hernández and Chris González Clark were the founders of Son del Barrio Records. Both were former active members of the Chican@ movement who in later years decided to focus their energies on Chican@ music as an important political project to record and diffuse socially conscious music.

³⁰⁶ Vanguard Records was an appealing label to us in that they had a history of struggle within the industry themselves, yet had found a way to develop a niche. They began as a label that recorded and released black listed artists during the McCarthy era.

³⁰⁷ Steve Berlin is a member of one of the most accomplished East L.A. rock bands-Los Lobos.
philosophies. Quetzal’s work soon became known for its unique sound and political message. Our music was entrenched in topics concerning the upliftment of and accountability to our community and other communities in struggle, the empowerment of women, as well as unapologetic commentaries on modernity and neo-liberalism.308

Quetzal has had its share of changes in personnel. Gabriel Tenorio and Tylana Enomoto left the band shortly after the release of our debut album, and we began to play with new people. The new members’ influences filtered into the compositions. “Worksongs” continued to feature Dante Pascuzzo (bass) who had a Jazz background, and added Rocio Marron (violin) who returned to the band and added her classical USC training, Edson Gianesi (percussionist) from Brazil who studied music composition at California Institute of the Arts (Cal Arts), Kiko Cornejo (trap drums/timbales) who was a Chicano from San Diego and whose musician father instilled in him the music and rhythms of Latin Jazz and Cuban son, and Ray Sandoval (guitarist) who was Japanese and Mexican and had Rock, Classical and Jazz training.

Quetzal has always welcomed varying members’ backgrounds as well as their sonic upbringing, that included both formal and informal training. The influences of the varying members organically filtered into the sounds. Understandably, the varied experiences could not be articulated in categorical genres. For all of these reasons, we were not interested in sticking to a certain industry sound. We consistently explored the many sonic experiences we had grown up with.

The Quetzal Sound: Joining the Trajectory of Chican@ Music Experience

Quetzal’s music and our way of writing and producing music is not unique to the Eastside Chicano music culture. Chican@ music in general has historically not adhered to genres.309 As mentioned in earlier chapters the community of Chican@ artivista musicians in 1997 was a varied sonic field. Quinto Sol expressed their concerns and ideas through Reggae, Dub as well as a mix of Cumbias. The Blues Experiment had a classic rock feel in the style of the Doors. Aztlan Underground played hip-hop/hard rock but also melded traditional Mexican indigenous instruments, like the huehuetl, and sonajas. These

308 The women question was mostly from a Chicana feminist perspective. There was an understanding that the challenges that women of color in the barrio faced were different than that of white women in privileged spaces.
309 Chicano music has never fit into market-defined genres.
groups expressed themselves according to their experiences and not in terms of genres and/or categories implemented by music market systems. As George Lipsitz has stated:

“In many areas of cultural production, but especially in popular music, organic intellectuals within the Los Angeles Chicano community pursued a strategy of self-presentation that brought their unique and distinctive cultural traditions into the mainstream of mass popular culture. Neither assimilationist nor separatist, they played on ‘families of resemblance’ — similarities to the experience and culture of other groups-to fashion a ‘unity of disunity.’ In that way, they sought to make alliances with other groups by cultivating the ways in which their particular experiences spoke with special authority about the ideas and alienations felt by others. They used the techniques and sensibilities of postmodernism to build a ‘historic bloc’ of oppositional groups united in ideas and intentions if not experience.”310

Quetzal’s music was no exception. We consistently worked with and among other musicians that were not directly tied to our own communities, which generated Quetzal’s unique sound.

For all the above noted reasons, most of our albums were released amid the new “World Music” craze and thus were often described with this genre. On the business end, we refused many liquor and tobacco sponsorships. I must admit that turning down large amounts of money from alcohol or tobacco companies seemed like professional suicide. In many respects it might have been. Music groups often survive on this money to fund their tours or other aspects of band business. However, Flores in particular was adamant in upholding every aspect of the Quetzal business workings accountable to the Zapatista philosophies, or as much as possible anyway. We would have long band meeting/discussions and would agree, some reluctantly, that liquor and tobacco related sponsorships were not the way to go. These were, after all, addictions that our families and communities were plagued by and Flores expressed that Quetzal as a group should refrain from building our career on these monies. Due to our unconventional choices we continued to ebb and flow in financial hardship. It was a creative, yet difficult time. Despite economic hardship we continued to play and collaborate with musicians and artists that had similar concerns.

**María Elena Gaitán and Son Jarocho**

There were many Chican@ artists we collaborated over the years. One such collaboration was with a performance artist and cellist named María Elena Gaitán. Gaitán was creating a solo piece titled, “The Adventures of Connie Chancla” and invited Flores and I to accompany her. We decided to play a couple of son jarocho pieces. The son jarocho we knew was based mostly on what we had learned via the popular 1950’s recordings. We had learned and imitated the most popular renditions of the sones. These recordings were fast paced, virtuosic, condensed versions of “La Bamba” or “Guacamaya.” Interpretations popularized by jarocho musical greats such as Lino Chavez, and Andres Huesca through films and recordings were classic interpretations that became codified in the popular consciousness as the only way to play son jarocho. Flores and I naturally followed the canon, and emulated this style of playing as much as we could.

During one of the rehearsals Gaitán gave us a cassette-tape by a group from Veracruz called Mono Blanco. Gaitán had just returned from trips to Guadalupe Center in San Antonio, Texas, where she had the pleasure of working with Mono Blanco. Gaitán wanted us to learn a son jarocho piece called “El Perro” or “the dog.” We had never heard about this son and were anxious to listen to it.

Upon listening to the cassette tape we heard a very different son jarocho than what we had grown up listening to. To our ears it was slow, and the verses were sung in a call and response fashion.¹¹¹ There was something about the playing and the intimacy of the recordings that moved us. Shortly thereafter we received a CD recording of a group named Son De Madera from a musician friend and colleague named Russell Rodriguez. In contrast, Son De Madera's CD recording seemed to be more experimental, but had the same call and response structure to most of the sones. The call and response, the pace, the verses, were all unique. Son De Madera’s CD also consisted of composed original works. Both of these gifts would change our music world forever, for both Mono Blanco and Son

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¹¹¹ I understand that utilizing “call and response” has a specific meaning in music scholarship (especially the literature on African diaspora music) the call and response in the son jarocho tradition is distinct in that the call and response is not always done between a single person and a chorus. Nevertheless, I utilize “call and response” because there is still a dialectic in the sense that someone “calls” a verse and another person “responds” which does not remove the son jarocho structure from its significant origins in both African and Indigenous cultures.
De Madera were rumored to be part of *el Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero*.

**El Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero and the Redefinition of the Son Jarocho**

*El Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero* (The New Jaranero Movement) celebrate and boldly declare to the world the traditions and practices of the *son Jarocho*. Rooted in Indigenous, African, and Spanish cultures, *Jarocho* is the music/culture of the southern part of the state of Veracruz, Mexico. The *son jarocho* is manifested and maintained through everyday practice of the *jaraneros* (Small eight string guitar players), *versadores* (improvising poets), *bailadoras* (dancers) and their community culminating at a social event called the *fandango*. There are various sizes of *jaranas* and they are central to the instrumentation of a *fandango*.

At the *fandango* creative competition and cohesion occur between musicians and dancers, suggestive metaphors and subversive social political commentary emerge from the *versadores*, producing fascinating moments of tension and community building at these celebrations.

*Nuevo Movimiento* practitioners consciously strayed from the institutional and commercial canons that had previously represented the state of Veracruz to inform today’s global society that the *son* is vibrant, thus in its tradition it is always changing. One of the most significant aspects of this movement was the resurgence of the practice of *fandango* in rural and urban communities. A short historical background will give further meaning and importance to the re-instatement of *fandango*.

**The Nation and El Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero**

In chapter two I discussed how the nation functions in relation to the formation of multiple ideologies in Mexico including ideas of modernity, the *mestizo*, progress, as well as the professionalization of the musician. The codification of music, food, and dance among the different regions across the Mexican nation was instrumental in fortifying these ideologies. Within the State and Region of Veracruz, Mexico, the

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312 The New Jaranero Movement.

313 Although the goal is to engage in convivencia, friendly competition between dancers and or versadores is common. It brings excitement to the festivities and enables a development of skills (between competitors) that enhances the *fandango* for all involved.
professionalization of the musician and the propulsion of the son jarocho solely as a genre was instrumental in the practice and devaluation of fandango.

Following the Mexican Revolution of 1910 the government canonized a homogeneous musical repertoire for each state in the Mexican republic including Veracruz.314 This national project would take shape in the promotion of literature, tourism, and federally funded research of indigenous dances. As previously mentioned the consolidation of cultures and efficient creations of staged spectacles came to be performed in Mexico and abroad through film (La Época de Oro del Cine Mexicano), recordings, and ballet folklóricos.315 Indigenous music culture and traditions were altered to fit the attention span of theatre, film and radio audiences. Over time and by default the constructed “folklor”316 began to replace the very practice from which they had emerged. In the case of the son Jarocho culture and music practice from Veracruz- the fandango and communal, participatory aspects (trans-generational, multi-level, spontaneous, community music making process) almost disappeared in this consolidating effort.317

Gilberto Gutierrez was one of the originators of Mono Blanco, a group that was partly responsible for the resurgence of fandango and whom initiated El Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero. Gutierrez was a Veracruz native, from a small town called Tres Zapotes. He like many others had moved to the capital of México Distrito Federal (D.F.) to find work after sugar plantations and coffee fields were shut down in the southern part of Veracruz.

In the mid seventies, Gutierrez along with his brother Jose Angel, Andres Vega, and Juan Pascoe looked to legendary Arcadio Hidalgo. Arcadio was a proud veteran of the Mexican revolution of 1910, and one of a handful of surviving early fandango practitioners. The Gutierrez brothers, Vega, and Pascoe learned and documented the

315 Ibid., 215. Ballet Folklóricos such as the work of the Ballet Folklórico de Amalia Hernández is rooted in a staged interpretation of Mexican indigenous cultures. More accurately these dance cannons are artistic works that have a strong ballet discipline and strict aesthetic qualities. These works were also intended for the theater rather than participatory practices.
316 Folklore.
317 I do not want to imply that the folklorico movement or the presentation style of the son jarocho that greats such as Amalia Hernández, and Maestro Rafael Zamarripa created were not “authentic,” “real,” or for that matter “fake.” I merely want to point out that the venture to represent a culture on stage or a culture represented as a spectacle invariably trades in local communal aspect for an artistic representation that eventually canonizes the culture itself. Thus by circulating this representation globally, it begins to replace the local practices for the more global understanding of what “son jarocho” is.
stories, protocols, *sones*, and *versada* that Don Arcadio’s memory was able to conjure up.\(^{318}\) In this way, Arcadio was their key to the past. He was also the trusted elder who allowed them access to all of the ranchos they subsequently visited for years to come in search of other elders who remembered the *sones*, the instruments, and the old dances of this forgotten pastime- the *fandango*.\(^{319}\)

Besides Mono Blanco’s professional ventures and staged music presentations of the *sones* in the vein of *fandango*, Mono Blanco spent a great deal of time reconnecting rural communities to *fandango* practice by pulling on the elders, the *señoras*\(^{320}\) and especially the youth to *convivir* in these nearly forgotten ways. Through Don Arcadio they were welcomed into the communities. A bunch of hippy-looking youngsters would have had trouble acquiring the trust and rapport needed to gain access to the older generation of men and women in rural communities. The community of *fandangueros* now refer to this time period as the “*rescate del son*.”\(^{321}\)

Similar to the efforts that Wilson’s description of Herder’s quest for folk poems and songs in rural communities in order to develop a “national identity.”\(^{322}\) Gutierrez’s, Vega, and Pascoe also moved through various rural communities in search of information. However el *Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero* was precisely against the grain of what the state had already established in the 1930’s, and the construction of what was supposed to be the canon of “Veracruz.” Most importantly *Mono Blanco* generated a discourse about the importance of *convivencia* in *fandango*.

Importantly, *fandango* practice re-democratized music, and summoned the community to partake in playing the *son jarocho* through *fandango* ritual. In this way, it challenged the nation-state canon not only in its representation of what was “Veracruz” or “jarocho,” but by the ways in which the music was generated. You need not be a “musician” to play in *fandango*. You could be the *señora* across the street, or the *viejito* who lives in the *cerro*.\(^{323}\) Either way the communities’ participation in *fandango* was

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\(^{318}\) There are now extensive recordings and archives that document not only the hundreds of versos this elder remembered, but also the tales and descriptions of early fandangos.

\(^{319}\) Instituto Cultural de Veracruz (IVEC) funded some of the “rescate”.

\(^{320}\) The older women.


\(^{322}\) Wilson, 819.

\(^{323}\) Hillside.
essential for the sake of *convivencia*.

This reconceptualization of music as an activity rooted in *convivencia* is an important disruption in how we think of music in this day and age. Musicologist Christopher Small has also noted the importance of noting this distinction by stating;

“Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do. The apparent thing “music” is a figment, an abstraction of the action, whose reality vanishes as soon as we examine it all closely. This habit of thinking in abstractions, of taking from an action what appears to be its essence and of giving that essence a name, is probably as old as language; it is useful in the conceptualizing of our world but it has its dangers.”

*Convivencia* as an aesthetic extends Small’s analysis, both his concept and introduction of “musicking” to alleviate abstraction. When we focus on the “activity” of *fandango* and the *convivencia* inherent in the practice, “abstracting” the music of the *son jarocho*, from the people and relationships that give it meaning, as it was done before, becomes difficult to achieve.

**Fandango Aesthetic and Convivencia as Radical Action and Thought**

“Put another way, participatory music and dance is more about the social relations being realized through the performance than about producing art that can somehow be abstracted from those social relations.”

—Thomas Turino

I suggest that *convivencia* is the central aesthetic principle in *fandango*. My treatment of *convivencia* as an aesthetic in music practice aims to focus relationships and process rather than sound. By treating *convivencia* as an aesthetic, I place a lens squarely on the relationships that are producing the music rather than the music itself. I stress relationships in the music making process as a way to disrupt the ways in which we tend to describe music generally.

As ethnomusicologist, Tomas Turino states in the above quote that “participatory music and dance is more about the social relations being realized.” The community or

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325 Small defines musicking as: “To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing, or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.”
327 Ibid., 35.
people that decide to participate in fandango marginalize traditional notions of efficiency and strict articulations of what “technique” is and should do in the creation of music as community. After all:

“Participatory music differs fundamentally from the other fields in that it tends to be in open form; further, since what happens musically depends on individual contributions and interactions in the moment, many of the sonic details of a performance are not, and cannot be, pre-planned.”

I do not wish to imply that virtuosity, technique and musicianship are not produced in these spaces. On the contrary, some of the most influential and virtuosic musicians have developed in fandango settings. Fandangueros such as Gilberto Gutiérrez, Ramón Gutiérrez, Patricio Hidalgo, Andrés, Octavio, TeresoVega, Laura Rebolloso Cuellar, and other musicians of their generation can play at the highest level of musicianship. Indeed, they have all been sought out in the professional music industry due to the level of musicianship at which they play. They were all well respected musicians in their local circles, nationally, and in some parts of the U.S. by the time Mono Blanco and Son de Madera recordings reached us. Their musicianship was enhanced, not diminished, by the discipline of musical convivencia.

Forging Fandangos

We lived with the Mono Blanco cassette tape and the Son De Madera CD for nearly a year, and played it over and over again. In 2001, Quetzal was invited to play in Veracruz for the annual Festival Afro-Caribeño. This was thrilling! According to the festival organizers we were scheduled to play in both Xalapa and El Puerto, so we made sure we scheduled time to seek out both Mono Blanco based in Xalapa and Son De Madera based in the port town of Veracruz. When we arrived, unfortunately, we were unable to meet either of them, but left messages and contact information at their respective addresses.

Upon returning to the U.S., we were contacted by Son De Madera and Mono Blanco and we established continued correspondence and made plans for the future. In 2002, former Troy Café and Centro Regeneracion artist collective member Aida Salazar,

328 Ibid., 37.
329 Andres “Tereso” Véga is the son of Don Vega Delfin from La Boca De San Miguel.
330 Port town of Veracruz.
as well as local organizer’s Lalo Medina and Marco Amador proposed a concert for the Ford Amphitheatre Summer Series titled, “Fandango Jarocho.” Amador had previously fostered a relationship with both Mono Blanco and Son De Madera. Amador and Flores suggested these groups for the final days of the Ford Summer Series. Quetzal and Los Jardín were also scheduled to play. We had been on tour and flew in from New York to make the concert date. The concert was a success.

Flores and Amador also resolved to have an event that was more accessible to Eastside residents. They organized a concert at East L.A.’s Self Help Graphics days after the Ford concert to raise funds for “El CaSon,” which was Mono Blanco’s new cultural project. The energy of the Self Help Graphics concert was especially powerful as many Chican@ artivistas were present and also sharing their music with the Jarocho. Aztlán Underground, Domingo Siete and Quetzal were but a few of the bands and artists that donated their time on this night. Former Mono Blanco member, Cesar Castro, recalls:

“Estábamos en el Este de Los Ángeles...no sabíamos lo que se trataba esta cosa de Chicanos no? Gilberto sabia un poco porque vivió en la Bahía. Pero eso fue diferente. La música era muy ruidosa, pero también tenía el elemento mas acústico. Eran varios grupos, ustedes [Quetzal], El Aztlán Underground...de ellos los seguí escuchando. El Domingo Siete me impresionaba por su capacidad de poder reproducir un sonido caribeño. Según nosotros veníamos de cinta negra pero al escucharlos pensé, no espérate estos le pegan bien bonito no? Siempre muy chistoso cuando pronunciaban ciertas palabras, Es decir que no pronunciaban bien que digamos...era nomás un toque donde te recordaba que....Ah si...son Chicanos.”

“We were in East Los Angeles...and we didn’t know what this thing about Chicanos was about right? Gilberto knew a bit because he had lived in the Bay Area. But that was different. The music was noisy, but it also had some acoustic elements. There were many groups, you guys [Quetzal], Aztlán Underground...who I continued to listen. The group Domingo Siete impressed me the most because of their ability to reproduce a Caribbean sound. As far as we were concerned, we were coming as “black belts” but as we listened to you all I thought, “No wait a minute these guys hit nice! Right? There were always those funny moments when you would pronounce certain words differently...that is you

332 Two Anglo-American sisters lead Los Jardín. Their father is a well-respected musician of the son jarocho genre named Tim Harding. Hence the title of their group, “Los Jardín” a play on their last name Harding and “Jardín” in Spanish meaning “garden.”
333 Gilberto Gutierrez had lived in San Francisco with the assistance of Eugene Rodriguez. Gutierrez as well as Castro note, however, that his prior visit to California had a much different agenda behind the dissemination of the fandango and son jarocho.
would not pronounce [Spanish] words well...those moments we were reminded that….Ahh yes...they are Chicanos.”

Castro’s comments of his surprise at the level of musicianship and community that thrived in East L.A. illuminate an important point. Many scholars have identified Chican@s as “huérfanos de la cultura” or orphans of culture. Great Mexican writers such as Octavio Paz have openly lamented the “vague atmosphere” of Mexicanism in Los Angeles, where it is “never quite existing, never quite vanishing.”

However, other scholars have rightfully noted that “Paz’s static and one-dimensional view of Mexican identity prevented him from seeing the rich culture of opposition embedded within the Los Angeles Chicano community.”

The general understanding is that Chican@s are in cultural deficit. That is to say, as a result of being born and raised in the U.S., Chican@s have no culture of their own and will forever look to the “mother country” (Mexico) for cultural inspiration. As such, these ideas have established a paternalistic understanding in the relationship between jarocho and Chican@s. Mexicans provide the culture while Chican@s strive to emulate or imitate being “Mexican.”

However, as I have stated earlier, Chican@ culture has a long historical and cultural trajectory. Furthermore, the Chican@ cultural and historical legacy reflect a desire to connect with other communities in struggle in the U.S. and elsewhere. In this sense, the affinity to the fandango for many Chican@s is not so much to become nor to emulate jarocho as much as it is to connect with the jarocho communities in order to build solidarity for the purpose of respective local and transnational struggles. “Neither assimilationists nor separatists,” Chican@ musicians sought to make “alliances with other groups by cultivating the ways in which their particular experiences spoke with special authority about the ideas and alienations felt by others.”

According to Castro, the community of skilled Chican@ musicians “le pegaban bonito” or played well. Gilberto Gutierrez was also pleasantly surprised to see the outpouring of support by the Chican@ community of artivistas for their new school. At night’s end, in the presence of the iconic

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334 Oral history interview (Los Angeles, CA.: April 2011).
335 As quoted by G. Lipsitz in “Cruising Around the Historical Bloc-Postmodernism and Popular Music in East Los Angeles,” 157.
336 Ibid., 157.
Mosaic Virgen de Guadalupe in the Self Help Graphics parking lot, Gutierrez encouraged us to introduce *fandango* ethics and practice to our community.

**Finding Fandangos**

Between 2002 and 2004, Flores and I made extended trips to Veracruz where we received invaluable musical direction and hospitality from members of the *fandango* community and from groups like *Son de Madera, Mono Blanco, Chuchumbe* and *Los Cojolites*. Flores and I were newlyweds and childless at the time, and therefore had the leisure to travel. We saved our pennies to be able to make these trips every summer and winter season. On one of many trips, we were guided across the state and into Sotavento to visit various communities, musicians and luthiers. We made our way to a region called Los Tuxtlas into various *ranchos* like Apixita, El Hato and Boca de San Miguel. Town after town, we moved by way of old noisy busses and beat-up taxis. Winding roads under big skies led us through gorgeous tropical greens. Traveling for hours throughout the day, we always managed to arrive to our destination before sundown. Most of what the *Jarochos* were eager to show us was the *fandango* practice.

As anthropologist Antonio García de León notes, *fandango* is derived from the Bantu word “fanda” meaning *fiesta*. As long as there is reason to commemorate or celebrate there is reason to *fandangear*. These festive moments can be familial or community events such as weddings, baptisms, new years, Christmas, *La Candelaria*, the arrival of a visitor, or the departure of one.

One of the most noticeable aspects of *fandango* for me was the absence of an audience. In *fandango*, there is no formal audience but rather all are considered participants. Therefore, the absence of a formal “audience” calls for an almost circular formation in the gathering of people, musicians and friends. Another unique attribute of

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338 Regional area along the southern part of the river, *Papaloapan*.
339 Cao-Romero, intro.
340 The *fandango* as verb.
341 La Virgen de La Candelaria is honored on February 2\textsuperscript{nd}. Festivities take place days before and after by the river Papaloapan in an old Spanish town called Tlacotalpan.
342 January 6\textsuperscript{th} is the day that celebrates the gifts Jesus was brought weeks after his birth. Children generally receive their gifts on this day.
343 I don't mean to say that there are no spectators. What I am trying to make clear is that there is no definitive “audience.” In this way it was a significant difference in how I learned to experience music as a audience member with the formal protocols of the theatre. A *fandango* cannot only take place in any social space but the spectator can also be a practitioner in the music, song, or dance aspects of *fandango*.
fandango is the transgenerational aspects of the fiesta. From the oldest practitioner to the youngest, the fandango community welcomes people in all stages of life.

In the midst of fandango, I quickly realized that there was an unspoken protocol. The requinto jarocho instrument “declara el son” or declares the melody signaling the jaranas\(^{344}\) of all sizes — the Leona,\(^{345}\) the quijada,\(^{346}\) and the pandero\(^{347}\) — to begin. Only recently have other instruments such as the cajón\(^{348}\) and the marimbol\(^{349}\) been re-introduced.\(^{350}\) The tarima\(^{351}\) is the heart of fandango, as it is the vortex of the festivity in which the dancers and percussionists set the pace, choose the sones and keep time for the musicians all around them. Women dance sones de a montón in pairs of two. The sones de pareja are danced by opposite sex couples.

Bailadoras are respected and praised for their ability to maintain a balance between timing and grace while improvising to the music. Bailadoras dance in continuous rotation on the tarima. When they have completed a cycle of verso and estribillo,\(^{352}\) they are immediately followed by waiting dancers who gently tap them to indicate that their time is up. A single son can last for hours at a time as bailadoras rotate on and off the tarima all night long. There are many sones in the fandango repertoire, all of which are tied to nature, love, animals or customs of the rural areas.

The older women in the communities are highly respected fandango practitioners. I spent most of the initial trips to Veracruz fascinated and in awe of the bailadoras of all ages, most of whom were dancing sones de a montón. After observing a few bailadoras, I had only begun to assimilate the complexity of the fandango style of zapateado or footwork. When I worked up the nerve to get on the tarima, I realized it was much harder than it looked. I found that the improvisational aspects of the dance were most challenging. Zapateado uses stomps, strikes, slides, shuffles and rests of the shoe in positions that are fully flat on the toe and the heel to create sounds on the tarima.

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344 Five-course eight string guitar like melodic instrument.
345 Bass of the requinto family.
346 A mule of horse jaw, percussion instrument.
347 Tambourine.
348 A wooden box with a sound-hole used for percussion.
349 A wooden box with a sound hole and thin strips of metal harnessed to the face. A bass and percussion instrument.
350 The cajon is an instrument that was more recently introduced, but there have been archives that reflect that the marimbol was not uncommon in fandango practice prior to the dormant period.
351 Is a wooden platform where the footwork/dance of fandango is executed.
352 “Verso” means verse, and is sung in call and response. “Estribillo” means refrain and in some circumstances can be considered the chorus.
Technically, there is but one main step that some jarochos will refer to as café con pan\textsuperscript{353}. This basic step was not difficult for me to grasp\textsuperscript{354} but rather it was the cadencia or cadence of the step depending on the son that I struggled with. I simply did not understand the feel of the zapateado, and as much as I wanted to dance I sat and listened instead.

Experiencing the 1997 Zapatista Encuentro had taught us enough to recognize the social, political and revolutionary implications of fandango. We learned that we had to build relationships in a particular way, and that relationships could be built through music, art and culture as tools of dialogue. I was humbled by fandango and the communal music making process. These early fandango experiences were near magical and we came home to East L.A. once again inspired by the convivencia we had experienced in fandango.

**Post-Xalapa Meeting: Chican@ and Jarocho Translocal Ripples and Waves**

“If the production of space is a highly social process, then it is a process that has an effect on the formation of subjectivity, identity, sociality, and physicality in myriad ways. Taking the performativity of space seriously also means understanding that categories such as gender, race, and sexuality are not only discursively constructed but spatially enacted and created as well.”\textsuperscript{355}

—Mary Pat Brady

The gloomy afternoon in Xalapa in 2003, solidified an informal network that at present implements fandango practice and resources in many sites across the U.S., primarily in the Southwest but also other U.S. regions such the North, Midwest, and Eastern United States. Fandango has been the primary “language” between Chican@ and Jarocho musicians and practitioners. Through the practice, teaching and discussion of fandango, multiple translocal dialogues and community networks have developed across the U.S. Fandango communities have developed in multiple ways yet are part of an extensive informal network that includes support and development of fandango instruction workshops, the fabrication of instruments, instrument maintenance, supplies,

\textsuperscript{353} Technically, there is but one step pattern to zapateado. This rhythmic phrase has been coined Café con pan or coffee and bread, which changes in feel depending on the son accompanying the dance. Other than this term, there is intentionally no terminology to refer to specific steps in zapateado due to the importance placed on the improvisation. This rhythmic phrase “café con pan” is merely a way to get children to grasp the mechanics of the steps.

\textsuperscript{354} I was somewhat familiar with the steps of zapateado from my early years of learning folklórico, which presents choreographed versions of zapateado along with other musical-dance forms from Mexico.

\textsuperscript{355} P. Brady, Extinct Lands Temporal Geographies: Chican@s and the Urgency of Space, 8.
original music collaborations and independent radio shows. Communities across the U.S. have unique histories and stories about how they have developed.

In East Los Angeles, early efforts to establish fandango praxis in communities revolved around teaching the most basic elements and protocols of fandango practice. Most of these ideas circulated through and around performance groups. As musicians, Flores and I were moved by the ethics of fandango, and we began to share the practice by playing the sones we heard on recordings of the Mexican fandanguero groups from El Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero. Initially, we listened to and emulated the distinct ways in which these practitioners played the sones, which were different from the Lino Chavez and Andres Huesca styles of our childhood. Mono Blanco, Son De Madera, Los Cojolites, Zacamandu and Chuchumbe were some of the Nuevo Movimiento groups that influenced the communal consciousness of early fandango practitioners in East Los Angeles. The rasgueos, singing style, verses and structures were all new to us.

The general idea was to get ourselves and audiences acquainted with the practices of the fandango while we simultaneously planned and fundraised to bring fandango elders and more experienced practitioners to teach for an extended period of time. The understanding was that the initial instruction by the Chican@s would allow an understanding of the basic elements and ethics of the fiesta, and thus make it easier for native Mexican Jarocho practitioners teach in greater depth. Performance of this new way of playing alluded to a different kind of practice and understanding of son jarocho. The goal was not to become son jarocho experts but rather to communicate the importance of the practice of fandango. Although the goal of the Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero was to reinstate the fandango in Mexican communities, our objective was not to reinstate a practice but rather to acquire the ongoing knowledge necessary to implement and engage in fandango in East L.A. communities. Individually and collectively, Flores and I along with other organizers and musicians such as Marco Amador, Russell Rodriguez (in the Bay Area) and the many East L.A. bands, artists, poets and musicians all contributed our community organizing knowledge and creative talent to support and jumpstart an important dialogue that thrives in the Eastside to this very day.

356 This early connection was mostly through word of mouth. The power of the internet, and social media and mostly itunes was still unknown.
In southern California, a group of Chican@ and Mexic@no youth organizing out of El Centro Cultural de Santa Ana became a particularly strong force in the dissemination of fandango in Los Angeles as well as in their hometown of Santa Ana, CA. Los Santaneros as they are known engage in organizing, teaching and sharing the practice of fandango out of El Centro. Through their performance group, Los Santaneros manage to fund the space, teach fandango as part of their cultural curriculum, and organize other events related to the needs of the local Santa Ana community.

Collaborations

It is important to recognize that, at present, in this musical dialogue resources and ideas flow in both directions. That is to say, Jarochos in Mexican communities have also enthusiastically initiated dialogue and music projects with Chican@ communities by drawing on fandango practitioners from Los Angeles and elsewhere to Veracruz during important fiesta times, or simply to collaborate on recordings or performances in various music projects.

Quetzal for example has been invited to co-develop traditional as well as creative music projects with masters such as Ramon Gutierrez and Laura Rebolloso from Son de Madera.357 From grassroots efforts to state funded concerts, we have collaborated and performed with Son de Madera on behalf of Teatro del Estado de Mexico and university-related cultural programs, such as the Instituto Veracruzano Cultural (IVEC. In the Bay Area regions, such as Oakland, Berkeley and San Francisco, as well as in Los Angeles, C.A.,358 former Chuchumbe members Liche Oseguera, Patricio Hidalgo and Andres Flores have developed relationships within the community of artists and musicians in these areas.

In addition, there have been music production collaborations across both sides of the border. Jose Q. Flores, Dante Pascuzzo and I produced “Las Orquestas del Día” by Son De Madera. Most recently, former Quetzal member Gabriel Tenorio produced “La Conga de Patricio Hidalgo,” which featured Latino and Chicano artists from Los

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357 Per Son De Madera ‘s request Flores, Pascuzzo and myself produced Son De Madera’s third studio album, “Las Orquestas Del Día” (2003).
358 There have been multiple music projects and poetry publications that Andres Flores and Liche Oseguera have developed with Bay Area fandangueros.
Angeles. This long awaited project debuted in 2012 at the annual Encuentro de Jaraneros in Tlacotalpan, México to great acclaim. The project featured Patricio Hidalgo, who is an original member of Chuchumbe and an outright legend in the son jarocho world.

**Transborder Meshworks and the Method to the Madness**

The following discussion is meant to explain how at present the fandango sin fronteras network operates. Lynn Stephen utilizes the concept of transborder to explain how indigenous transmigrant communities have always crossed “racial, ethnic, linguistic, and class boundaries between Mexico and the United States” in both northern and southern directions. Chican@ artivista and Jarocho relationships and methods are reminiscent of transmigrant communities in Oaxaca, California and Oregon. Transmigrants can generally be defined as those persons who “having migrated from one nation-state to another, live their lives across borders, participating simultaneously in social relations that embed them in more than one nation-state.” Transborder or transmigrant along with Escobar’s concept of meshwork is generally about understanding the interlinked networks migrant communities are developing as a result of globalization. These theoretical concepts can also be applied to Chican@ and Mexican Jarocho communities.

Stephen advocates for both meshwork and transmigration as new tools for the social sciences in that they emphasize fluid forms and ever changing strategies of survival. Stephen states that the concept of meshwork emphasizes how transmigrant communities are “self-organizing, and grow in unplanned directions; they are made up of diverse elements; they exist in hybridized forms with other hierarchies and meshworks; they accomplish the articulation of heterogeneous elements without imposing uniformity and they are determined by the degree of connectivity that enables them to become self-sustaining.” The transmigration between Mexican and U.S. fandango communities has

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359 “La Conga de Patricio Hidalgo” was produced by Gabriel Tenorio and released independently.
360 Ibid., xv.
362 Ibid., 19.
363 Ibid.
been extensive and has indeed grown in unplanned directions. This has made every fandango community unique not only in terms of origin and respective histories but also by the ways in which they organize themselves.

Through varying forms of social media, every major city in California is now linked in one way or another to a community or performance group of fandango practitioners in cities from San Diego, Santa Ana and Los Angeles to the Bay Area. Although most activities engage in local contexts, the networks also reach out to other cities and groups across the state. At present, the resources have become quite extensive for Mexican fandango practitioners or groups who plan trips into the U.S. Master practitioners or groups can book an entire tour jumping from one city to the next.

For example, one site will send out emails to multiple other fandango sites explaining their plans and timeline for the maestro/a whom they plan to invite. If it is feasible and fits well with the season, other sites will invite the master to visit and set up workshops, performances or speaking engagements. Most of the resources come from grassroots organizing with occasional ties to local colleges or universities. Coordination from one site to the next has been difficult to navigate as the meshworks vary in organizing style and facilitators, but over time it has become more efficient. On all other occasions, each site will inform nearby cities of their local efforts through social media such as Facebook or emails as well as at fandangos or other related events. Local sites within the states are in constant communication and have built ongoing relationships as a result. That being said, transmigration and meshwork are useful terms to describe fandango sin frontera networks because they disrupt the social scientist focus on binaries (global/national, local/transnational), and instead make visible the material survival strategies within the various communities.

Transmigration also suggests a permanent “state of being” between two or more locations. This “state of being” suggests that social expectations and cultural values are being shaped by more than one political and economic system. Such is the case with jarocho transplant Cesar Castro who married Xochi Flores, a Chicana from Los Angeles, had a daughter, and now resides in El Sereno, CA. Having relocated to Los Angeles,
Castro began to feel the nostalgia of being away from Veracruz. Castro, however, has found ways to remain connected to the fandango community and musicians in Veracruz by creating a You-Tube podcast series, Radio Jarochelo. According to Castro, he created Radio Jarochelo as a way to not only bind the multi-scattered sites of fandango practitioners all over Mexico and the U.S., but also as a way to remain connected to the thriving fandango community in Mexico. The content of Radio Jarochelo is dedicated to everything and anything having to do with son jarocho and fandango. It is self-produced and airs every fifteen days. For Castro, conceiving and creating Radio Jarochelo was a way of being in two places at once. Once he began to create and air his show regularly, Castro comments, “Yo sentía que yo salía, tenía vida otra vez.”

In addition to Radio Jarochelo, Castro founded Cambalache in 2010, which has since become one of the most respected traditional son jarocho groups in Los Angeles. In addition to performing with his group, Castro along with his wife and bandmate Xochi Flores continue to conduct fandango workshops in community centers, elementary schools and universities in the general L.A. area. At present, Cesar is also known as an accomplished luthier who is sought out by most U.S.-based fandango practitioners for son jarocho instruments.

Chican@ Contributions and Innovations in the World of Son Jarocho Fandanguero

Although fandango has its origins in Veracruz, Mexico, there have been some U.S.-based fandango musicians that have revolutionized how son jarocho is played in both the U.S. and in Mexico. East L.A.-based musicians such as Juan Perez and Jacob Hernandez have had an influence on the son jarocho genre, especially in performance. Perez, a prolific bass player, was invited to play with Son de Madera in 2003. Perez’s years with Son de Madera include two studio albums as well as tours in the U.S., Canada and Europe from 2003 to 2010. According to co-founder and musical director of Son De Madera, Ramon Gutierrez, “Pérez tiene algo, entiende el son y todas sus posibilidades sin salirse demasiado.”

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366 I felt like I would leave. I had life again.
367 Cambalache includes Chican@ East L.A. musicians Juan Pérez (bass), Alejandro Hernandez (voz, requinto, jarana), Juan Manual Sandoval (voz, jarana primera) and Xochi Flores (voz, jarana, zapateado).
368 “Pérez has something, he understands the son and all of its possibilities without going outside (the genre) too much.” Personal interview (Xalapa, Veracruz: April 2007).
Another East L.A. native who has also made an impact on the son jarocho world is Jacob Hernandez who was a key member of Los Cojolites from 2003 to 2009 and again in 2012. At present, Hernandez is known as one of the most proficient marimbol players in the world of son jarocho. Octavio Cloques Rebolledo, an authority and scholar on the origins of the marimbol, has also commented on Hernandez’s distinctive and highly developed style of playing marimbol: “Me gusta mucho como toca, ha desarrollado algo propio, es uno de los mejores.”

With a growing interest in fandango there is a demand for instruments and for strings. Co-owned by Chicano musicians Jacob Hernandez and Gabriel Tenorio; Guadalupe Custom Strings (GCS) is the most well respected and sought after string manufacturer in both the U.S. and Mexico. Although making a profit by producing a product from raw material is nearly impossible in the U.S., GCS has managed to stay afloat. Both Tenorio and Hernandez are working musicians with multiple projects both in the U.S. and in Mexico. This work along with the constant demand for strings from musicians all over the U.S. and Mexico has resulted in a steady stream of income.

Ethnomusicologists such as Thomas Turino confirm that music in our societies is generally thought of as “an identifiable art object that can be owned by its creators by copyrights and purchased by consumers.” Identifying this gradual change that allowed for an understanding of music from past time to identifiable is due in part to the strength and pervasiveness of the music industry. Turino points to the ways in which massmediated products have been perpetuated over the last century and how these efforts by the industry have secured such a conception. As Turino states, “If we briefly consider the products of the music industry overtime, we can glimpse cosmopolitans’ gradual shift in thinking of music making as a social activity to music as an object.”

Chican@ artivista musicians, one way or another, resolved to reinstate participatory music and dance practices in communities. In this case, it was mostly through the introduction and practice of fandango into East L.A. communities. Although Chican@ artivista musicians had been organizing and engaging in other ways through

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369 I like very much how he he plays. He has developed something of his own. He is one of the best. Octavio Kloques, Personal interview (Veracruz, Mexico: May 8, 2007).
370 Ibid., 24.
371 Ibid., 24.
*fandango*, we were able to engage with community on a level outside of Western “performance” culture. ³⁷² For “the participatory field is radical within the capitalist cosmopolitan formation in that it is not for listening apart from doing — and we still tend to think of music as something meant for listening. Participatory performance is also radical in that it hinders professionalism, control, and the creation of commodity forms.” ³⁷³

As a point of clarification, I do not wish to diminish the importance of playing music as a performer. As a professional musician, I understand the effects that a great performance can have on an audience, community and society as a whole both live on stage and from a music recording. In short, I do believe that performance in the most traditional sense of the word can incite social change. However, *fandango* as a transgenerational participatory music, poetry and dance practice brings the empowerment of music to people in a most exceptional way. As I stated earlier, experiencing *fandango* for the first time was mentally and physically cataclysmic. *Fandango* disrupted the concept of music as I knew it; it was more about engaging community through music and not playing solely for an audience. In short, *convivencia* with community through music practice disrupted what I thought I knew about the power of music. Furthermore, the practice — both in a physical and ideological formation — democratized music in a way that disrupted how I understood music in capitalist societies. That is to say, the sociality of sound through *son jarocho* revolves around an understanding that the music is essential to the *convivencia*. In this sense, sound is not so much an excuse to gather as much as it is a means to build togetherness. Furthermore, the togetherness initiates multiple dialogues. Therefore, it is no coincidence that we see more than one *fandango* site use the tools of this music and *convivencia* through *fandango* to build around other issues and struggles pertaining to their local and global communities (i.e., immigrant rights, food sovereignty, mental health, youth organizing, etc.). For *fandango* is able to instigate dialogue and critical consciousness among its practitioners.

*Fandango* practice has been used throughout the U.S. towards many ends related to social justice issues. In Los Angeles, for example, *Son del Centro* has utilized *son

³⁷³ Ibid. 77.
*jarrocho* and *fandango* practice in support of immigrant rights, May Day marches, tomato workers’ strike efforts, food sovereignty, and other related local and international struggles. In Seattle, Washington, the Seattle Fandango Project (SFP) organizes *fandangos* and workshops in women’s shelters, at food justice events, and in preschool, elementary school and high school workshops. Furthermore, *fandango* practice has led people to address issues surrounding the U.S. Mexican border on both a physical and ideological level. In San Diego, a *fandango* community has held a yearly “*Fandango Fronterizo*” or Border Fandango at the U.S.-Mexican border since 2008, whereby two *tarimas* are placed on both sides of the border fence for a collective *fandango* between U.S. and Mexican participants.374 *Fandango* practitioners and spectators have come from far and wide to participate. This yearly *fandango*, in particular, is a testament to the way *fandango* can be a powerful political act. Practicing *fandango* along the border is a powerful testament to how space interacts with sound.

As performance theorist Diana Taylor informs us, the “hemispheric lens, stretches the spatial and temporal framework” of performance to interconnect what may seem like “separate geographical and political areas.”375 By managing to hold a *fandango* at the border, the sociality of sound in this sense imagines the border out of existence. In this sense, embodied practices are “an episteme and a praxis, a way of knowing as well as a way of storing and transmitting cultural knowledge and identity, that is not adherent to political or nation-state boundaries.”376 Indicative to the threat that this kind of practice can have along the border, authorities have begun to implement more obstacles for the organizers of the *Fandango Fronterizo* especially on the U.S. side.

Discouragement of performance and ritual has been an important colonial tactic. In early colonial times, friars went through great lengths to forbid ritualized performance.377 “The space of written culture then, as now, seemed easier to control than embodied culture.”378 To this effect, an imposition of hierarchy of the written word over the embodied performance practice over the indigenous people of the Americas was

374 Footage from the Fourth Annual Fandango Fronterizo, Accessed August 21, 2012
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsq68NJezyw.
376 Ibid.
378 Ibid.
another colonial tactic. Understandably so, because written knowledge is not only quantifiable but also easily monitored and controlled. One can fathom how convivial creative expressions could have been a threat to colonial rule at the time. It is not so farfetched to consider that the practice of fandango along the U.S.-Mexican border can be a powerful reinstatement of the kind of ritualized performance that engenders community empowerment.

I mention only a few of many fandango inspired activities, initiatives and projects to show how the ethics and practice of fandango inadvertently conscientizes whole communities as well as individual subjects. At the very least, it seems to instill in practitioners a very important lesson. By dissecting the way in which music functions through this practice, through fandango, inevitably fundamental questions arise: Why did we not participate in music as community before? What forces have changed my current way of thinking and being? What social arrangements have I taken for granted? What other elements in my life have I failed to question? Indeed, fandango communities have taken on different questions pertaining to the needs and desires of each community in the midst of the same ritual practice.

Performance “In Situ”

I hope I have made it clear that fandango is more than dancing, singing and poetry. As a fandango practitioner, I can attest to the deep sense of embodiment in the practice. As stated earlier in this dissertation, Bibi Bakare-Yusuf’s analysis on the deconstruction of the black body in pain, the knowledge base built around the material consequences of torture and slavery continues to reproduce black/brown bodies’ objectification both systematically and through consent. That is to say that we conceive of our labors and creativities as workers or through the lens of commodification. Fandango practice is a re-embodiment exercise. In this way, social memory is reintroduced not only into the body of self, but also into the body of community. Many people have commented on the empowerment they feel when practicing music in community. That fandango as a ritual performance is being taken up in the U.S., of all places, is a testament to the kind of practice that makes you feel alive.
A great deal of significance and insight into stories, struggles and memories reside in performance practice. There are many scholars that seek a reorientation of the ways that social memory and cultural identity in the Americas have been studied. As Taylor states, “embodied expression has participated and will probably continue to participate in the transmission of social knowledge, memory, and identity pre and post writing.” Taylor continues, “It is difficult to think about embodied practice within the epistemic systems developed in Western thought, where writing has become the guarantor of existence itself.” Taylor warns about the emphasis on literary and historical documents. In Taylor’s view, writing has come to stand in for and against embodiment.

Many other Chicana@ artivistas have grasped the importance of participatory music and dance practices of fandango as a community building practice for these reasons.

The act of creating spiritual, ideological and physical space through performance practice resonates with Turino’s account of Conimeños as migrants in Lima, Peru. As Turino tracks indigenous praxis and belief systems in the ayllus, he comes to recognize that the “sound object” of panpipe music is utilized by Conimeños as a tool of cultural and spiritual survival. Similar to Chicana@ artivistas, Turino informs us that Conimeños “adapt, alter, combine, and create cultural resources in unique ways, and for very specific reasons, the search for security, feelings of self-worth, and some kind of livable space not least among them. Importantly, Conimeños access the “sound object” of their indigenous music to gain a footing in the Peruvian capital of Lima.

Although Chicana@ artivistas do not regard fandango as a “sound object,” Turino’s work nonetheless illustrates similar forms of resistance through music and performance that allows practitioners to carve out some sort of space. Furthermore, fandango as an ephemeral practice adheres to the politics of space and identity in Chican@ Eastlos life, where disenfranchisement and globalization have had an effect on

379 Ibid., 10.
381 Ibid., 18.
382 T. Turino, Moving Away from Silence: Music of the Peruvian Altiplano and the Experience of Urban Migration. Moving Away From Silence (1993) refers to the “silence” left in the villages by the migrants who leave their Conimeño homes. But it also speaks to the voices they develop by refusing the “silence” imposed on them by racism in city life.
383 Ayllus are political geographically religious social units.
384 Ibid., 18.
385 T. Turino, Moving Away from Silence: Music of the Peruvian Altiplano and the Experience of Urban Migration, 3.
386 T. Turino, Moving Away from Silence: Music of the Peruvian Altiplano and the Experience of Urban Migration.
local economies and social services. As previously stated space is made scarce and land goes “extinct,” and this becomes one of the many issues of power to contend with when attempting to build community. Chican@ artivistas have come to understand that fandango is a phenomenon that can manifest and disappear. However, even with its ephemeral quality it will nonetheless instill in participants the sociality of community. In this sense, Chican@ artivistas and fandangueros are always “in situ: intelligible in the framework of the immediate environment and issues surrounding them.” Fandango then becomes the perfect tool that “imagineers” a community that can adapt to the volatile issues of space in Eastlos life.

Relevant to performance, in both Conimeño and Chican@ artivista cases, Taylor asks an important question:

[I]f we consider performance as a process of disappearance...are we limiting ourselves to an understanding of performance pre-determined by our cultural habituation to the logic of the archive?

I suggest that as a capitalist society we have limited ourselves to the logic of the archive by regarding performance practice as ephemeral and something that dissipates with no trace of knowledge or real impact beyond memory. In contrast, participatory music and dance practices, especially the ways in which fandangueros and Conimeños utilize these social techniques as a form of resistance and community building, “make visible an entire spectrum of attitudes and values.” For as Taylor reminds us, “the multcodedness of these practices transmits as many layers of meaning as there are spectators, participants and witnesses.”

Challenges of Fandango

The effort to reinstate self and community by re-embodiment through the process of fandango has had its many rewards, but not without its challenges. As previously

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387 M.P. Brady, Extinct Lands Temporal Geographies: The Politics of Space, 8.
391 Ibid., 49.
392 Ibid., 49.
stated, the “social field” of *fandango sin fronteras* is vast and has stretched across nation-state boundaries, and linguistic and cultural borders.\(^{393}\) *Fandango* as a protocol and tool has assisted in the formation of communities in various parts of the U.S. and the world. Chican@ *artivistas* for the most part have articulated the importance that *fandango* has had on the formation and strengthening of community, however, the cultural logic of capital markets often find their way onto the *tarima*.\(^{394}\)

An essentialization of *fandango* and what it means to be “jarocho” is often idealized as community subjects begin to articulate and discipline each other on how to be *jarocho*. Meaning that, the imitation in *jarocho* performativity begins to take precedent rather than the practice that leads one to *convivencia*. This disrupts community cohesion. In addition, the *convivencia* in *fandango* and mutual sharing on all levels decentralizes power, yet it fails to deconstruct the engrained notions of what it means to be an “authority” and a “student” in capitalist society. The sharing of minor to major skills in *fandango* practice from one person to another empowers the person imparting the knowledge oftentimes to the point of corruption. A person who feels that teaching the music, song or dance of *fandango* makes him/her an “expert” becomes closed off to the ongoing learning of the practice, and is no longer open to criticism from others who may be more experienced practitioners.

The impetus to perform the community practice of *fandango* as formal presentation is also epistemic. *Fandango* practitioners often with little to no knowledge of the practice begin to aspire to be on the stage as “performer” and “authority” of *son jarocho*. Thus, the formation of performance groups becomes a way for subjects to reach a kind of prestige, and social and economic capital. These are challenges that both Chican@s in the U.S. and Jarocho communities in Mexico share, for although *fandango* has, for the most part, been communicated as a democratic tool that decentralizes music practice and instills in an entire community the possibility of mutual participation, it nonetheless fails to undo the “cultural habituation” of capitalism.\(^{395}\)

**Chican@ *Artivista* in Graduate School**


\(^{394}\) *Tarima* is the wooden platform with sound holes on the side. It is the center of *fandango*.

The years that I have spent being a part of the community of fandangueros on both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border have been spiritually and mentally altering. Along with the Zapatista teachings and the Encuentro in 1997, *fandango* practice and the many lessons that come with it have, over time, reorganized what I believed music to be as a child. My father’s teachings slowly lost their sense and value.

When a person’s creativity intersects with capital, it is in essence disembodied from the creator. This is quite simply the greatest lesson I have learned about the social relations of music, one that I continue to struggle with. I continue to play in Quetzal. As a band we are consistently challenging ourselves to stay mindful of the things that are most important. We strive to strike a balance between participating as professional musicians in the music industry and being one of many community members in an active *artivista* community.

In 2005, my partner and I had a son who we named, Jose Maria Sandino. We continued to tour well up until my due date. By the time Sandino was two years old, he had been all over the U.S., Mexico, Canada, Japan and Moscow. It soon became difficult to tour. I decided to take a moment to reflect on our times as both professional and community musicians, and all that we had learned in the process. I applied for graduate school and was accepted into the Gender Women and Sexuality Studies Department at the University of Washington, Seattle, under the tutelage of Professor Michelle Habell-Pallan.

I had simultaneously applied and received a Fulbright Garcia-Robles Fellowship to finish music compositions that I had started with Laura Rebollos from *Son de Madera*. We decided to take the Fulbright to go to Veracruz, and deferred the first year of graduate studies at the University of Washington, Seattle. The move to Veracruz, and later Seattle, Washington, was drastic. We had never been away from our families or our community, and least of all as new parents. In retrospect, I do not think I considered just how difficult it was going to be. Once again, the lessons learned in our EastLos and translocal communities would come in handy, especially in the Pacific Northwest. Along with the love and support of others, we slowly built a home away from home in Seattle, through the power of music.
CHAPTER FIVE

Los Guardianes de la Convivencia

“Esta obra esta protegida por los guardianes del fandango jarocho.”

—Patrício Hidalgo Bélly

After years of traveling throughout the state of California and engaging in dialogue with multiple communities, fandanguero and sonero master Patrício Hildalgo published a poetry book titled, Piedras y Flores or Stones and Flowers (2010). The final page of this self-published book reads, “This piece of work is protected by the guardians of the fandango jarocho!” Taking the place of industry copyright symbols, Hidalgo identifies “los guardianes del fandango jarocho” or “the guardians of the fandango jarocho” as those whom will protect his work. Besides the many beautiful versos, décimas and poems that inhabit the pages of Piedras y Flores, I was particularly moved by this simple statement, for it reaffirmed to me the communal essence of fandango. With this statement, Hidalgo addresses communities that partake in, maintain and live in the midst of convivencia fandanguera, and thus understand the importance of protecting both collective knowledge and individual legacy, thereby placing the responsibility, protection, and vigilance of Hidalgo’s poetry in their hands.

As one of many guardianes of the son jarocho fandanguero and as a 1997 Encuentro testigo, I will demonstrate in this final chapter how the lessons learned in the midst of varying translocal community struggles and triumphs translates into artivista praxis by way of two examples: the Entre Mujeres: Translocal Feminine Composition Project and the Seattle Fandango Project (SFP). I will demonstrate how Chican@ artivista praxis operates to produce, instigate, and plant seeds that bring about a new understanding of the social relations of music. Through these projects, I will demonstrate how the sharing of the methodologies learned in the 1997 Encuentro and in fandango practice have touched down to impact our intimate lives, how we have utilized and shared with others the lessons learned, and how these moments of convivencia have

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396 The Guardians of Conviviality.
397 Hildalgo self-published this small poetry book while in residence in the California Bay-Area.
398 A ten-line stanza poetry form often used in the son jarocho.
399 Witness.
continued to instigate critical consciousness within ourselves and others.

The first example; *Entre Mujeres: Translocal Feminine Composition Project* was formally initiated in Veracruz, Mexico, from the September of 2008 to June of 2009. *Entre Mujeres* fostered a new way of music engagement that actively took women and their multiple responsibilities into consideration. I will demonstrate how low-cost portable recording equipment facilitated transnational music dialogues between U.S.-based Chican@s in Los Angeles and *Jarocho* musicians in Veracruz, Mexico. This process made visible the ways in which recording traditions exclude women from participation by the nature of industry recording techniques.

Furthermore, I will also engage in a theoretical analysis of the collective songwriting process learned in the 1997 *Encuentro*, which was utilized in the *Entre Mujeres* project. I came to find that *convivencia, testimonio*, trust, healing and knowledge production are the principle epistemologies in the collective songwriting method. Through the *Entre Mujeres* experience, among others, I have witnessed time and again how the collective songwriting method creates space, builds community, challenges multiple patriarchal systems, and can potentially produce knowledge that is accessible beyond the academy. I believe that eventually songs as texts, or what I introduce here as *sung theories*, can be accessible archives that communicate important embodied knowledge across time, disciplines, borders, generations and other ways of knowing.

The second example recounts the inception and initial development of the Seattle Fandango Project (SFP). Having left my tight-knit family and artist community in East Los Angeles in 2008, in order to commence my graduate studies at the University of Washington in Seattle, the teaching and sharing of *fandango* praxis became a way for my partner and I to connect with others in the Seattle area. The initial sharing of *fandango* protocols initiated the Seattle Fandango Project, which continues to induct an ever-growing number of practitioners of all races, consisting of documented and undocumented immigrants, mothers, grandmothers, UW students and professors.

At present, SFP is one of the most influential and active *fandango* communities in the United States. SFP’s awareness and ongoing critical analysis of social and economic power as sites of contention for community well-being has established an informal system of checks and balances within the community. Importantly, I demonstrate how
SFP community members navigate activities ranging from grassroots efforts, paid gigs, and UW-related functions and endorsements. In this way, I will show how the collective efforts of the guardianes of fandango jarocho in the Pacific Northwest underscore the importance of participatory music and dance practices. Additionally, I explore how these important forms of convivencia through participatory music and dance practice usher communities into critical consciousness that translate into multiple areas of their individual and collective lives. Participating in and witnessing SFP’s developing community-organizing methods through participatory music and dance practices continue to reinforce my belief in the power of music.

ENTRE MUJERES: WOMEN MAKING MUSIC ACROSS BORDERS

Entre Mujeres: Music in the Womb

It was the month of March in 2005, and Figueroa Avenue in the Highland Park neighborhood of Los Angeles was still. At 9 a.m., most of the businesses were still closed as the noisy street cleaner’s beeps disrupted the morning’s silence. I waddled by early morning neighborhood community members who continuously gave me encouraging smiles. Deep in the third trimester, walks were one of the last things I was able to do on my own. Reaching the corner, a viejita400 gave me an approving nod as I waited for the light to change. A homeboy smoking a cigarette also called out, “go ahead mama!” as I walked by. The multiple comments, glances and smiles affirmed how I must have looked and surely felt — as big as a house!

I had been a practicing professional musician for many years with my band Quetzal before deciding to have a baby. My partner and I had many years of travel and performance under our belt, and in the fall of 2004 we felt it was finally time to make a move towards parenthood. Being pregnant is a special time. One can be overwhelmed with feelings of excitement and possibility. But, it can also be a humbling moment. In the last month, I found myself feeling vulnerable and at the mercy of more nimble-bodied individuals. For these reasons, I cherished my walks. Like music, it was an activity I could do on my own. Walking was good for these last stages and I tried to do it everyday.

400 Little old lady.
This particular morning’s walk was quite special since the great son jarocho musician and composer Laura Marina Rebolloso was coming to visit, and I was thrilled. After countless visits to Veracruz to work and dialogue with the community of musicians there, including Rebolloso, I jumped at the chance to work with her again. Rebolloso was coming to Los Angeles to participate in a concert that was to take place in the newly opened Japanese American Museum (JAM) in the historic downtown area known as “Little Tokyo.” JAM afforded us the opportunity to invite Rebolloso with whom we planned to compose original pieces to perform the night of the concert. I realized this gig would be one of the last times I would get to play before giving birth to my son.

As a female musician, who was soon to be a mother, I experienced a sense of fear and sadness. Anxiety began to set in upon realizing that the time and creative energy I once had would soon be gone. Although motherhood is a beautiful stage of life, it was also quite challenging for me to conceive of relinquishing my creative time. I soon came to a place of acceptance and began to feel that music was a luxury and would naturally be secondary to all parental responsibilities. Resigned to my new reality and anticipating my good friend and colleague’s arrival, I quickened my pace so that I would be home in time to greet her upon her arrival from the airport.

Change of Mind but Lack of Time

Rebolloso arrived and we began to collaborate. Her visit changed my fatalistic outlook on the balance between music and motherhood. A mother of two, Rebolloso assured me that life would certainly change, but that I would also be, more than ever, inspired to compose. She challenged me to write about my body and the great miracle that was happening inside of me. During her two week visit, we were able to compose a piece we performed in concert. However, there were many other ideas that were left unfinished. My low energy often slowed us down. I was often tired and needed to rest. Nevertheless, we managed to capture initial ideas on a Digi-01 recording system. The fairly inexpensive equipment helped us document the impromptu jam sessions and ideas onto a recording software program called Pro Tools. We listened back to the recordings at will and chose sections to extend into full compositions. With the benefits of technology, we were able to get the most of my fleeting energy. The Japan American
Museum presentation was a success and Rebolloso returned to Veracruz the following day.

On April 5th, 2005, after thirty-seven hours of labor, my son Jose Maria Sandino was born and my life as a mother began. The beauty and struggle of nursing, not sleeping, and seeing the first smile, word, step and fall aged me. Watching my son grow before my eyes was as Rebolloso had indicated, inspiring. The songs Laura and I began remained in the hard drive. Every once in a while, as I fed my son, I would pull up the sessions Rebolloso and I had begun and listened. Listening to the material was both wonderful and torturous, for I felt I was sitting on important knowledge that needed to be heard. I was determined to see it through. Once I settled into motherhood, and with my partner’s unwavering support and encouragement, I began to try and find ways to finish the songs.

The Fulbright and the Birth of “Entre Mujeres”

In 2007, I decided that the Institute for the International Education (IIE) offered the best opportunity to complete the songs that I started with Rebolloso. In retrospect, my motivation for applying for a Fulbright Garcia-Robles Fellowship was twofold. As a participant observer, I planned to better understand how women were positioned within the fandango tradition in Veracruz, Mexico. But, ultimately, I wanted to acquire the time and funds so that I could finally finish the project I started with Rebolloso. I decided to title the project “Entre Mujeres” or “Among women.” In early April, I received confirmation that I was awarded the Fulbright Fellowship. On September of 2007, my partner, son, and I packed some of our belongings and moved to Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico.

Xalapa, Veracruz, and Feminism

As I stated earlier, prior to our arrival in Xalapa, Rebolloso and I had already established a personal and professional relationship. I had previously met other fandangueras like Wendy Utrera, Kali Niño and Violeta Romero, in fandango celebrations in Mexico or in the U.S. as they or I traveled on tours. As I reconnected with

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401 The Fulbright promotes transnational academic and crosscultural collaboration between the U.S. and countries around the world.

402 Those who participate in fandango.
them and explained the project, most of the women felt that my “feminist” approach was too radical. Although I never mentioned feminism in my articulation of the project, I was primarily interested in women’s participation, which made it feminist to them. Again, I explained that my goal was to simply highlight the female presence in the music movement. Although I was not actively excluding men from my project, Wendy advised that I needed to broaden my discourse to include spouses and children in order for the mujeres to feel comfortable with their own participation.

This spoke volumes in terms of how feminism was understood outside of the U.S. It demonstrated to me that Mexicanas are very much interested in activities or projects that benefit the mujer but not at the expense of family and spousal exclusion. As a Chicana who understands the importance of family and community in feminist political practice, I agreed with this sentiment but realized that this ideology did not translate into my “professional” musical practices. Wendy’s concerns about the discourse of the Entre Mujeres project was the catalyst that allowed me to reflect on how traditional recording practices exclude women and the totality of their lives, and how I had internalized this in my own project and music production outlook.

Scheduling Conflicts and the Tools of Technology

Taking Wendy’s advice, I rearticulated the Entre Mujeres Project to include men, children, and spouses willing and able to participate. It was well received and we began to make plans to compose. My partner and I managed to rent a small, furnished flat in the center of Xalapa on Avenida Morelos, down the hill from the historic Parque Benito Juarez. We settled in quickly with the kitchen, living room and a small makeshift recording nook all in the same space. Most days, we would wake up to Xalapa’s orchestral city sounds. Being from Los Angeles, we could distinguish the usual vehicle traffic noise. But, Xalapa sounds were also intermingled with the sounds of vendedores ambulantes that announced their goods and services, such as the gas company’s

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403 I acknowledge that different perceptions of feminism also persist within U.S. borders. However I thought that my being of Mexican descent, the women’s music project I was seeking support for, would not be understood as “feminist” per se, but simply as a gathering of women for the purpose of creating music.

404 This was a beautiful park in the center of Xalapa named after former president of Mexico, Benito Juarez (1858-1861). Juarez is a notable figure in Mexican history for being an effective leader and one of the only full-blooded Zapotec ever to hold office.

405 Street vendors.
rhythmic metal tapping, the cowbell signaling trash pickup, and the single stroke of the knife-smith’s metal pan flute. These were all sonic reminders that we were far from home.

My partner and I would make our morning coffee, breakfast for Sandino, and then we would wait.

We had previously invited the mujeres to our little flat, “para tocar,” to play, hangout and compose. Unfortunately, for me and my little music project, most of their time was completely taken up by “chamba,” or work. I, on the other hand, was ready on every visit, instruments out and eager to begin. Oftentimes, one of the mujeres would call and say how something had come up. Other times, they would show and we would get to play some sones and jam for a while.

I soon found that there was rarely time to spend playing music, let alone rehearse musical ideas enough to record them. Per my partner’s suggestion, we began documenting even the impromptu jam sessions. This is what we had done with our first songs while I was pregnant and too tired to continue. From that point on, in any given visit or jam session, the kitchen became a sound booth and we would record every idea we came up with. As Wendy, Kali or Laura showed up, the space would slowly transition from kitchen and living room space, to a recording/home/kitchen studio. The microphones were set up, wired and ready to go at a moment’s notice. Even if we could not see a song through from start to finish, this became a great way for us to document the work that was being generated.

**Convivencia and Fandango, as “Quotient Expressions of Feminist Consciousness”**

Most of the women involved were very receptive to working on original compositions; however, it was still a challenge to move beyond the son jarocho tradition and the “cuna” that was their primordial formation. With the exception of Laura Rebolloso, none of the women involved had ever written or composed original work. Having been fandango practitioners most of their lives, the mujeres were not used to engaging in original compositions. However, the convivencia or convivial moments we

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406 A “sound booth” is an isolated recording room that is built to isolate vocal performance or any instrument that can not be inputted directly into the sound board. It is a space that is padded and designed to isolate the instrument and to block-out any other noise.

407 “Cuna” literally means “crib.” Oftentimes, son jarocho practitioners refer to son jarocho or fandango as the cuna in order to signify their musical origins. The state of Veracruz can also be referred to as la cuna del son jarocho.
had engaged in through *fandango* prior to and during my stay in Xalapa had generated a sense of intimacy that made it easier for them to take risks and compose outside the familiar.

The *fandango* repertoire offers many instances where it is only mothers, women and girls that participate on the *tarima* while collectively delivering the percussion/dancing aspect of the music. These moments offer invaluable interaction and dialogue, especially among women whose bodies become conduits of individual and collective expression. The female “homosocial” space in *fandango* is the *tarima* and the *sones de a montón*. The *sones* that are danced by women only provide moments that Angela Davis might call “quotient expressions of feminist consciousness.” Davis uses this phrase in reference to women in Blues traditions and practices. I extend this feminist consciousness to *fandango* as a related African diasporic expression. In the *fandango*, the *tarima* creates a space where the “collective consciousness” of women gathers in the presence of community. In this way, the *tarima* is where the innermost *entrañas*, or the entrails and internal parts, of *fandango* can be revealed, for *entrañas* is where love and creativity reside. In the case of women, the *entrañas* is a reference to their uterus and the powers therein.

Most of the mothers and women in the *Entre Mujeres Project* had experienced a collective consciousness on the *tarima* and in the midst of *fandango* practice, which I believe helped to alleviate the difficulties of composing original works when it came time to do so. Disrupting the patrilineal traditions of recording pedagogy, the collective consciousness and sharing of *entrañas* was carried over into *Entre Mujeres* recording techniques. Despite initial hesitation by some of the *mujeres*, the musical ideas began to flow, albeit slowly.

**Song as Knowledge and Historical Text**

“For women, then poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival…”

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409 The *tarima* is a wooden platform that is used as a percussion instrument by *fandangueros* or those who participate in *fandango*. They dance on the *tarima* with shoes that create a rhythmic pattern that drives the *fandango*. The *tarima* is therefore always at the center of *fandango* and the musicians are always surrounding the *tarima* and thus the dancers.
and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.”

—Audre Lorde

A song as a sonic and literary manifestation is life’s sound-scape, a unique cathartic memento, and can be a powerful political tool. Without question, a song is also an important historical text. A person’s testimonio, life views, triumphs, aphorisms and struggles can be expressed in song lyrics. In this way, song lyrics can be viewed as knowledge and theory. Multiplied by community, it can be a powerful exercise in consensus and collective knowledge production. The Entre Mujeres project and the engagement of collective songwriting underscore what Audre Lorde has so beautifully stated, that poetry and creative expression are not a luxury but rather an important factor in the lives of all people, not least of all women and mothers.

My self-defined role in the Entre Mujeres project was to generally encourage an exploration of topics. But, in the end, the mujeres decided on their own themes. We would often co-write the lyrics, or each take a stanza or verse to author. The songs were often driven by experiences in motherhood, love or the state of the world. The most intimate moments of creativity in the collective songwriting process inevitably brought about discussions pertaining to participants’ experiences, life lessons and the like. Most participants shared and learned from other testimonios and this process bound the group in an intimate way. Through testimonio, in the telling of our lives to each other, there was inevitably a relationality that resulted from these moments of sharing and healing.

As the group Latina Feminist has stated, “Testimonio can be used as a way to create knowledge and theory through personal experiences.” Indeed, the Entre Mujeres project became a space from which to discuss and create collective ideas among women and create a sense of community among all mujeres involved. Similar to testimonio, the song is not the most important aspect of collective songwriting, but rather its ability to

413 The Latina Feminist Group is a group of Chicana and Latina feminist scholars that include Luz de Alba Acevedo, Celia Alvarez, Olga Najera-Ramirez, Norma E. Cantu, and Ruth Behar to name a few. These important scholars theorized and discussed the importance of testimonio in a book titled *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).
“engender solidarity.”414 As I read through my journal entries, I noticed how much of the women’s lives I knew because of both small and lengthy conversations that took place in the process of creating music that often spilled into song lyrics.

**Song and Motherhood in “Nacimiento”415 and “El Rebozo”416**

*Entre Mujeres* began with and around motherhood as a central topic. My pregnancy and Rebolloso’s experience in motherhood set the tone for the album, but this was not necessarily consistent. As other women joined the project, the topics took to different subject matter. Rebolloso, however, was steadfast on centering motherhood.

By the time I arrived in Xalapa two years after having my son, Rebolloso had had a third child. Her schedule was, therefore, the most tedious and we often stole time to work on music, or worked when her youngest, Natalia, was sleeping in her stroller. This was never a problem for the child. After becoming a mother, Rebolloso gave music instruction to young toddlers in her home for extra money. Her children were accustomed to being around music and sleeping through music practice. When we began to meet in Xalapa, Rebolloso wanted to finish a piece we started in Los Angeles titled, “Nacimiento” or “Birth.” She had written the lyrics so that I could reflect on my pregnant state at the time. The lyrics read:

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Bebe duermes dentro de mi
Estiras tu cuerpo creces.
Sientes has nacido dentro de mi
Existes desde el instante que Dios te concedió.
El universo dentro de mi!
Nacimiento
Nacimiento
Nacimiento

Baby you sleep inside me.
You stretch your body. You grow.
You feel. You have been born inside me.
You exist inside me from the moment God granted you.
The Universe inside me!
Birth
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415 The Birth.
416 A Mexican shall be used for decorative and functional purposes.
Many years later, I asked Rebolloso about her interpretation of these lyrics. Through email correspondence, she explained:

“Crecer es trascender el egoísmo, y dar la vida a un ser. Es romper con el esquema individualista del pensamiento moderno. Al dar la vida uno la recibe. Como la semilla que al morir, al abrir, se da. Dar el cuerpo para esa labor mística de la existencia es algo que el mundo no valora, pero en la mujer encuentra una enseñanza y algo más profundo que las necesidades egoístas.”

“To grow is to transcend egoism, and to give life to another being. It’s breaking with the individualist thought the modern world upholds. As you give life, you also receive. Like the seed that dies as it opens to give life. To give of your body is a mystic labor, part of being in existence and that is something that the world does not value. But in women we find that teaching and something more profound than egotistical necessities.”

Rebolloso used the moment of composition as a cathartic exercise. Having had three children she often struggled with finding support both in the home and in society. This left her feeling that motherhood was a role that was not always valued in society. Rebolloso was adamant on writing about motherhood from every angle. Pregnancy, the birthing process, child rearing, they were all important topics in music to discuss as far as she was concerned. In retrospect, I remember how frustrated Rebolloso had been when I first met her. She had almost completely left music practice. However, she was coming out of this silent moment. Her eldest children began to exercise more independence, which allowed her to slowly reconnect with her music practice. Yet, the struggle and tension in the home was still there. In her soltera\textsuperscript{418} years, she co-founded Son De Madera with her partner Ramon Gutierrez. They had had short-lived success with their debut album. But, since marring and starting a family, their relationship had turned sour. In this sense, Rebolloso and Gutierrez became the quintessential musician couple in crisis when they decided to start a family. In Mexico as in many other countries, the mother is most often the “logical”

\textsuperscript{417} Personal email correspondence (Los Angeles, CA: May 2009).

\textsuperscript{418} Single.
choice to stay home with the children, especially when she is nursing. Rebolloso nursed all of her children for at least a year, which made it difficult to travel.

Like many other families, the daily care for the children and reproductive work in the home was left mostly to Rebolloso, which left her little to no time for her music. In contrast Rebolloso’s husband, Ramon Gutierrez was able to travel the world in the years to come with Son De Madera. This created a terrible tension in the home that spilled into their daily life. For all of these reasons, I believe that Rebolloso has since used her music as a cathartic tool, but also as a way to communicate a mother’s plight and glory through her song lyrics. “Nacimiento” and the high regard for motherhood that the song communicates is inspired by her own experience in an effort to bring motherhood, in all its facets, into popular consciousness.

As previously mentioned, during my time in Xalapa, Rebolloso began to reconnect with her music more actively. She managed to do a number of things to advance her solo music career as well as to make ends meet. On one occasion, Rebolloso managed to make the final regional cut in a prestigious music competition called the Cancionisste. She took this opportunity to compose a song titled “El Rebozo” or “the shawl”. A rebozo is one of the most important tools a Mexican mother can have. This article of clothing, that serves both adornment and practical needs, is especially popular among indigenous women, who use them to hold and rock their children to sleep. “El Rebozo” did not win the competition, but cultural grants such as those sponsored by the state are one of many that have recognized her work. Rebolloso’s compositions reflect a mother’s needs and contributions, her efforts and the challenges she endures on a daily basis in the home and in society.  

Song and Migration in “Sobreviviendo”

Birth and the birthing process was a common topic in the Entre Mujeres project. The sharing of community knowledge and experience was also a common trope. Another project participant, Silvia Santos, shared some of her community experiences in her song “Sobreviviendo” or surviving. Originally from the state of Yucatan, Santos moved to

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419 Cancionisste is sponsored by the State of Veracruz. Previous winners of this prestigious award have gone on to become Mexico’s leading composers/performers. Composers such as Jose Alfredo Jimenez, Juan Gabriel, Marco Antonio Muniz, and Agustín Lara are some of the most notable figures.

420 Surviving.
Xalapa as a young woman. Santos and her husband David have their own son jarocho group named Hikuri and were active participants in the fandango networks mostly in the Xalapa area. Kali Niño suggested I invite Santos to participate in the project, and introduced her to me. We met in a fandango in downtown Xalapa, at which time I explained the project and Santos was enthusiastic about participating. A mother of a ten year old daughter, Santos came to my home whenever she had a free moment, which was usually during school hours.

Having played several tours in the course of Hikuri’s career, Santos had visited California four years prior to her participation in the project. While visiting the Santa Barbara area, Santos had an opportunity to meet and dialogue with various undocumented immigrants from Mexico. Aware that I was from California and that the music might reach this community, Santos seized the Entre Mujeres experience to create a piece that expressed the effects mass migration can have on families on both sides of the border. “Sobreviviendo” expresses both the views of those who migrate as well as those who stay but are affected by the loss of “los ausentes” or those who are absent. Santos sums up “Sobreviviendo” in this way:

Esta pieza es una síntesis de algunas vivencias de una estancia en California, en donde me encontré con migrantes que me contaron su sensación de tener el corazón lejano y en la mente en el lugar que dejaron a sus seres queridos, y cómo eso los motivaba a seguir en un mundo diferente, en el mundo físico de las jornadas extenuantes y una cultura diferente. Creo que todos somos viajeros en este mundo, pero ser viajero con el corazón dividido es algo muy duro, y ver tantos rostros, escuchar tantas historias de desarraigo, es algo que me dejó la huella que trato de plasmar en “Sobreviviendo.”

This piece is a synthesis of a lived experience I had in California, where I found myself with [Mexican] migrants that told me how they felt, the sensation of having their hearts and minds with their loved ones far away and how this motivates them to continue living in the physical world of exhausting labors away from their homeland and in a different culture. I think that we are all travelers in this world, but to be a traveler with a divided heart is something that is very difficult. To see so many faces, and listen to so many different stories of family ruptures, is something that left its mark on me and that I try to communicate in “Sobreviviendo.”

Santos was moved by the testimonios she heard in Santa Barbara, but also by the

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421 Personal email correspondence (Los Angeles, CA.: May 2009).
families in Mexico whose loved ones have migrated to the U.S. We talked extensively about the many people she knew that were now in the “gavacho.” “Sobreviviendo” is a double-sided view of migration — a global phenomenon that affects those who leave as well as those who stay. An ode to immigrant people’s stories, and all at once a synthesis of the grand effects migration can have on more than one community.

**Song and Community Knowledge in “Yerbabuena”**

“She [Kali Niño] has come by the last two days and we have been working on a new tune. This was sort of a percussion/vocals idea I had in terms of borrowing rhythmic elements from the tradition in order to create on a new platform. It began with two different percussion patterns. I played cajon and Kali danced on the *tarima*. The next day we listened to the recordings we had, and we began to polish the idea. I have been really taken with Kali not only with her musical drive but also with her great talent and bold ideas. I’ve learned a lot from her. Although she suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and her left hand has calcified stiff which has limited her arm extensions, she manages to stay connected to music. She is unable to play *jarana* for an extended period of time, but she is an amazing *bailadora*, and a human encyclopedia of *versos!*”

—Excerpt from Author’s journal, entry dated September 20, 2007

Although song lyrics can be a conscious expression and window into a person’s soul, in the collective songwriting process much can also be left out. What this journal entry does not capture is how thoroughly Niño and I spoke of her upbringing and life views. In retrospect, these creative moments sparked entire conversations that were impossible for me to jot down in great detail. From marriage to health, small conversations were interspersed between the writing of verses and creating melodies. Niño spent a great deal of time discussing and jotting down ideas for songs or lyrics especially in a piece titled, “*Yerba Buena.*” She explains:

“*Esta pieza de la “Yerbabuena” son sones de nosotros, fue la primera vez que hice algo diferente al son jarocho. Solamente el estribillo, lo saque de un libro de versos de Colombia. Pero el resto de la canción digamos que es inspiración de nosotros.*”

“This piece is titled Yerbabuena” and they are our sones, it was the first time that I did something different from son jarocho. I only took the chorus from a book of verses from Colombia. But the rest of the song you can say is our own inspiration.”

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422 “Gavacho” is slang for white man. In this case they use it in reference to the U.S.
423 The good herb. Usually *yerbabuena* refers to spearmint plant and leaves.
424 Niño co-wrote some of the lyrics with her husband, Alec Dempster.
De arroyos vengo yo
Para sembrar mi palabra.
Al cantar alzo mi voz
para atravesar montañas.
Mi semilla es un cantar
La flor de mi pensamiento
No dejare de germinar
porque la nutre mi aliento
y su esencia popular

I come from Rivers
To sow my seeds
As I sing I raise my voice,
So as to cross mountains.
My song is but a seed.
The flower of my thoughts
I will not cease to germinate
Because they are nourished
By breath and its popular essence.

Niño’s explanation of “Yerbabuena” is inundated with memories of a young girl growing up connected to nature.

Niño comments on how this song is informed by the contact she had with the earth as a young child stating:

*Que habla? Pues de la naturaleza, es como cuando...estaba pensando en ello, estaba imaginando pues ser como el viento, la semilla. Cantarle también a la tierra. Yo viví en un pueblo donde tuve mucho contacto con estos elementos no? Uno es como una semilla que se va regando o alguien la va sembrando.*

“What does it speak of? Well its about nature. Its like when... I was thinking, imagining begin like the wind, a seed. I wanted to sing to the earth. I lived in a town where I had alot of contact with these elements right? We are like seeds that are spread or someone goes about spreading the seed.”

Niño incorporates indigenous terms and meanings in “Yerbabuena,” illustrating the ways in which her community’s knowledge and understanding of the world could translate into a song. In this way, embodied knowledge, which may be dismissed solely as individual expression in a song, may communicate community knowledge as well.

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425 Personal correspondence (Los Angeles, CA.: May 2012).
“En mi pueblo usamos la palabra “Nahual” que es una persona que se convierte animal o algún otra cosa. Entonces puedo usarse eso en que te transformas en un ave en una canción en un viento...cosas que tenga que ver con la naturaleza. Eso quise dar entender en esta canción.”

“In my town we use the word “Nahual” which is a person that turns into an animal or something else. So there is an understanding that one can transform into a bird, a song, or into the wind...anything that has to do with nature. That is what I wanted to demonstrate in this song.”

In essence, Niño’s song speaks of the connection of the interior and exterior spheres of the body and how the voice is the conductor and messenger. But, through “Yerbabuena,” Niño is also sharing part of her community’s understanding of how nature operates in relation to human beings and the existential world.

**Song and Birth Rhythms**

There is a misconception that collective expression does not allow for individual influence and inspiration. I find this not to be the case. Most women felt free to bring other music knowledge to the dialogue. Djahel Vinaver, for example, studied Odissi dance extensively and enthusiastically offered to contribute her knowledge to the group. Although she did not participate lyrically, her contribution came mostly in the rhythmic structure of the song.

Vinaver wanted her rhythmic contribution to reflect the great energy a woman carries. Nineteen months prior to her participation in the project, she had given birth to a son. The feeling and stance of the final months of pregnancy were still vividly implanted in her mind. She proceeded to compose a thirteen beat cycle with her bare feet on the tarima. Odissi dancers ornament their feet with silver or silver-plated ankle bells that add to the percussive nature of the footwork in the dance. I, along with Flores and her husband Chaz, added cajon percussion, guitar, and bass to the thirteen beat cycle. I watched in amazement as Vinaver composed on the tarima jarocha. Odissi is a highly stylized dance art form that accentuates both the upper body as well as the foot percussion. Vinaver slowly swayed back and forth creating her rhythm. “Es como el paso

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426 Ibid.
427 Djahel Vinaver studied *Bharata Natyam* and *Odissi* dance forms in India with Bharata Kalamani C. Radhakrishna, Kelucharan Mohapatra, Kavita Sridharani, Manoranjan Pradhan, and Ramani Ranjan Jena.
It was true, thinking back to those last weeks of pregnancy my body felt as big as an elephant, as strong and as present. Later, I came to find that in Odissi dance and culture the elephant is revered and sacred.

What resulted was “En Cinta” or “with child.” Taking cues from Vinaver’s description of her own pregnancy as well as reflecting on my own experience, I wrote lyrics that portrayed the strong long rhythmic cycle along with her bodies slow movements.

Un compas.  
Como las olas marinas profundas del mar,  
Se mece, respira profundo,  
Vela, vela caminar,  
Vela su respirar!

A slow pace  
Like deep ocean waves  
She rocks, she breathes deeply  
Look at her walk  
Look at her breath

The last section of the piece accelerates in tempo when the final chorus sings, “luz!” or “light!” to signify the moment the child is born, the transition from labor to birth. The fast paced thirteen beat cycle, along with Vinaver’s vocal articulation of the rhythm was entrancing. In the recording, Vinaver purposefully recited the rhythm in a breathy delivery, imitating labor contractions and the kind of breathing that may take place during stage three labor.

Vinaver is an advocate of natural birthing methods. Her sister is a well-respected partera or a midwife in Xalapa and Vinaver was often present to assist in the process. Vinaver frequently spoke of the desire to change the outlook of how society commented on a pregnant mother’s state. In particular, she talked about how troublesome the phrase “se alivio” is. When a woman gives birth a person might say, “fulanita se alivio,” which literally means “so and so healed.” This gives the connotation that the woman was sick with child and thus “heals” in the birthing of the child. That is to say, pregnancy can

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428 “It’s like an elephant’s step, right?”
429 Lost in translation is the Spanish language term, “véla.” “Ve la” can mean “look at her...” Or it can mean “véla” as in candle or to watch over.
430 Literally means she healed or she is no longer sick.
be misconstrued as a state of illness, as a physical ailment that a woman must overcome and heal from to be whole and better. Vinaver was adamant about redefining this moment in a woman’s life by re-establishing the phrase, “dar a luz,” or “bring to light.” She made sure I understood this and made a point of it in my writing of the song. Some of the **mujeres** tackled outlooks on pregnancy in and of itself in the songs. Through alternative rhythms and words, Vinaver wanted to communicate a different outlook in how pregnancy is perceived in society.

**Song and Percussion/Voice in “La Madera”**

Much like “En Cinta,” song ideas were often initiated by sounds and not by topics or lyrical ideas. They were at times driven by the composer’s desire to explore percussion and intricate melodies, or experimentation in vocal melodies and performance. The intention for what is now titled, “La Madera,” was to explore *canto y percussion,* or song and percussion. Kali Niño had expressed a desire to explore the rhythms of the **tarima.** The **tarima** is an important instrument in the **fandango.** As a percussionist and bailadora, I loved the thought of trying to delve into the **tarima** and mix it with other percussive

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431 There are some parts of Latin America that do use the phrase, “dar a luz” but there are times when, “se alivió” is most common. Djael wanted to make sure that “se alivió” was countered whenever possible.

432 The wood or lumber.
instruments within and outside of the *son jarocho* genre. I brought my trusty *chekere* with me from Los Angeles as well as my *zapateado* shoes. I was able to buy a new *cajon* once I arrived in Xalapa. I suggested the idea to Niño of mixing the *tarima* with other percussion instruments that were not part of the *son jarocho* tradition and Niño jumped at the chance to explore.

Listening back to the original jam session recordings, I could hear the sounds of Niño stomping on the *tarima* as I tried various rhythms on the *cajon*. The one rhythm track we finally settled into was a dialogue between a 4/4 and 3/4 conversation. I played in a 4/4 time on the *cajon* and Niño’s rhythmic step on the *tarima* was in 3/4. Once we arranged and tightened the dialogue between these two time signatures, we began to experiment with melodic ideas.

With only a little encouragement, Niño explored various melodies. Reminiscent of feminist music theorist Susan Cusick’s articulation of the social construction of voices, both Niño and I were very aware of the vocal experimentation we were engaging with. Cusick suggests that the mediator from the interior to the exterior world is the voice itself. And, in this way, vocal performances are the accompaniment of ideas performed through bodies. “Voices are always performances of a relationship negotiated between the individual vocalizer and the vocalizer’s culture.” In “*La Madera*,” Niño utilized her voice to negotiate melodies within her home culture as well as outside of it. Cusick sees the liberatory potential, in that, most important is the agency embedded in this act.

Niño, for example, sung verses where she experimented a little with her vocal delivery. It was the equivalent of trying on a different sort of attitude through the tone of voice. I loved it! But, when Niño listened back she hated it! I urged her to explore and she tried something new, but did not like it and decided to go back to something more familiar. Nonetheless, the final piece is powerful both lyrically and melodically.

The verses were researched by Niño. She found them in an old Spanish publication. The lyrics represent the sound of *madera*, or wood, in relationship to a women’s body:

*La madera y la mujer tienen el mismo sonido*

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Wood and woman
Have the same sound
For in play and in love
They reach so deeply into the senses
That one cannot be sure of oneself.

La madera or wood is an important element in fandango. All fandango instruments utilized in the practice are constructed from wood, including the tarima. Along with the instruments, which are usually made out of cedar wood, the tarima is at the center of this practice. “La Madera” then relates both the natural element of wood and the important role it plays in fandango music, and the role of women in the practice of fandango. The final piece was a tapestry of varying percussive instruments with lead and chorus vocal performances. There are no melodic instruments, besides the voices. Sound, wood, woman, love and voice are words that encompassed the spirit and strength of “La Madera.”

Traditional Recording Studio Techniques and the Kitchen as a Creative Space

As I stated earlier, having to adjust my recording methodology made me realize that recording traditions exclude women and particularly mothers by the very nature of how the industry uses techniques and its facilities to records under strict timelines and great pressure in an effort toward efficiency. Therefore, unless you have a great deal of backing by the record company music is produced as quickly and efficiently as possible. My past experiences in the recording studio had been a series of stressful situations. Although Entre Mujeres was initially invested in this way, I was forced to reconsider the traditional processes, and instead to foster a new way of engagement that took women and their multiple responsibilities into consideration. Flipping the script, technology was used to our benefit based on our limited time due to family and other responsibilities. For this reason, our recordings often took place in the home, kitchen or living room space. Furthermore, by using portable technology, at one time only available to financially resourced professionals, we advanced existing transnational musical conversations by
opening domestic spaces that were usually occupied by familial responsibilities to the composition and recording of music.

We must consider the importance of how playing music in the kitchen redefines the home space that has to often been perceived as a place where mothers experience the drudgery of day-to-day housework. To also be creative in the home, in the presence of children and other family members decenters the discourse surrounding the kitchen and the drudgery that may be attached to it. Chicana popular culture theorists have articulated domestic or “folk” artistic and religious altars as the “terrain of female agency for indigenous, mestiza women.” I believe that the kitchen space contributed to the inspiration of composing and proposing new ideas by the women, not only for its familiarity but also for the informality of the space. Entre Mujeres and the composing of music in the home add to this liberatory discourse. Like altar building, music can also embody a space of “some religious or gender freedom, as well as creativity, for the socially marginal and oppressed.” To be creative in the kitchen and in the home is to disrupt our understanding of when and where music can take place and why.

Alternatives to Western Forms of Music Communication

Besides the element of space in relation to recording pedagogies, the Entre Mujeres project woke me to alternative forms of music communication. We, the mujeres, never spoke of time signatures or about composing in formal music language. Our communication was organic in the sense that we described music, rhythms or melodies in non-Western terms.

For example, on one occasion, Niño described a melodic line as if she were drawing mountain landscapes with her fingers in thin air. She made up and down hand gestures as if she were painting a picture for me to follow. This worked out perfectly for me as I cannot read Western music notation very well, and I have often communicated with my band members in similar ways. Heavy descriptions in relation to nature or

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434 I am not diminishing the role that housework contributes to the wellbeing and happiness of the family. Too often Western understandings of housework are mistakenly viewed as not contributing a monetary value and thus less important and meaningful than the kind of work that is paid with currency. My mother may have complained about the work that needed to be done, but she also placed a high regard — almost spiritual — to the meaning behind housework, because she believed that it was inevitably for the good of her children and family.

435 Pérez, Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Alterities, 93.

436 Ibid.
emotional feelings were often what communicated sonic musical ideas among the women. This kind of musical discourse was important to the overall expression of the pieces and the synergistic efforts of bringing women, music, space and nature to the qualities of the project.

**Sonic Authenticity and Bordercrossings**

The technology utilized in the *Entre Mujeres* project disrupts ideas of sonic authenticity. That is to say that, *Entre Mujeres* as a project, defies being claimed by either Mexico or the U.S., due to how technology enabled sonic ideas to traverse borders allowing neither country to make claim to the sounds produced. Rhythm tracks to “Sirena Lanza” or “Mermaid Rising,” for example, were recorded in Xalapa. Yet, I was able to bring the unfinished session across the border into East Los Angeles where the prolific singer and songwriter from *La Santa Cecilia*, known as *La Marisoul*, added lyrics and her vocal performance to the piece. Much like Gopinath’s analysis of Indian *Bhangra* music’s hybridity in the U.K., “Sirena Lanza” and the translocal exploration of the piece “demands a radical reworking of the hierarchical relation between diasporas and the nation.” In this sense, “Sirena Lanza” is a “diasporic text” giving neither Mexico nor the U.S. claims on the authenticity of the piece.

Adding to the intricate nature of the diasporic texts of *Entre Mujeres*, “La Madera” was performed by Susana Baca from Perú in the 13th Annual “Baktun” concert organized by *Mujeres de Maiz* on March 8, 2010. As I have stated in previous chapters, Felicia Montes and other Chican@ *artivistas* created *Mujeres de Maiz*, a grassroots organization based out of East L.A. that annually celebrates creative work by women of color.

**The Entre Mujeres: Women Making Music Across Borders CD**

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We, my partner Flores, son, and I, left Xalapa on May 28, 2008. I would complete my graduate school coursework and doctoral qualifying exams before revisiting most of the material. In September of 2012, I was finally able to release the finished project titled, “Entre Mujeres: Women Making Music Across Borders.” Today, the Entre Mujeres project stands as an archive or cultural product that documents one of many dialogues between Chican@ and Jaroch@ communities. Mothers, women, men and children in the project participated in different capacities: lyricism, music/instrumentation, zapateado or voice. Most of the composition topics involve familiar themes in the world of music like being in love, “Sirena Lanza” or “Mermaid Rising,” coping with a broken heart, “Agua del Mar” or “Ocean Water”, “Quien Nacerá” or “Who Shall be Born?”, and “Vida” or “Life,” which speak of hope and visions for a positive future. There are also unconventional tracks such as “Chocolate” that discuss the cocoa trade from the perspective of a child caught up in the throes of slave labor.

438 “Entre Mujeres: Women Making Music Across Borders” release was made possible by the community of supporters we generated through a kickstarter campaign where we managed to raise 10,500 dollars to complete the mixing, mastering, and printing of the project.” (Accessed March 8, 13), http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/mgonzalez/entre-mujeres-translocal-musical-dialogues. 
Although the translocal relationship between Chican@ and Jaroch@ began through the engagement of *fandango*, the final recordings of the *Entre Mujeres* project was not a *son jarocho* album. *Entre Mujeres* reflects the plurality of sounds, ideas and voices of Chican@, Latin@, and Jaroch@ communities. A flurry of genres from rock, jazz, blues and Odissi rhythms to the elements of hip hop can be heard in the final album. The finished *Entre Mujeres* project has the privilege of including the creative talents of Laura Rebolloso, Wendy Cao Romero, Tacho Utrera, Kali Niño, Alec Dempster, Raquel Vega, Anahí Hernández, Violeta Romero, Gisela Fariñas Luna, Gilberto Gutiérrez, Silvia Santos, Djael Vinaver, Joaquín López Chapman, and many more from Veracruz; and U.S. participants included Rocío Marrón, Cava, *La Marisoul*, Mia Xitlali Tenorio, Laura Cambrón, Gloria Estrada, Niki Campbell, Tylana Enomoto, Maya Jupiter, Marissa Rondstandt, Shirley Alvarado del Águila, Jose Q. Flores, Russell Rodríguez, Xochi Flores, Cesar Castro, Dante Pascuzzo, Alex Chadsey and Ángela Flores. Ultimately through these compositions, sounds and ideas, *Entre Mujeres* provides the listener an opportunity to understand the perspective of the mother, the daughter, the child, the lover, the musician, and the worker.

**Collaboration and Knowledge Production as Decolonial Tools**

When one understands the inherent patriarchal underpinnings of colonialism, without question we can see how *Entre Mujeres* pedagogy moves to decolonize practice in the academy, in popular culture and in music practice simultaneously. In the academy, embodied practice within the epistemic Western system is discounted as a source of knowledge. Also, the lone knowledge producer must be the subject in question in order for his/her work to be empirical and thus valid in the eyes of academia. *Entre Mujeres* challenges these paradigms in that women collectively theorized, created and performed their own knowledge, while building an archive about themselves and their realities as they saw fit. The *Entre Mujeres* project also challenges form in the academy by producing these works in a very accessible format: song. By producing these collective knowledges in song form, we challenge the discourse of power rejecting the inaccessible language that can often keep knowledge untouched and unseen by grassroots communities. In this way, the *sung theories* produced by *Entre Mujeres* participants have
the potential to reach a larger community of thinkers, thus prompting questions, critiques and most importantly dialogues in various communities.

At the same time, I hesitate to be over celebratory of collaboration. Collaboration, as Nagar and Swarr suggest, “must be subjected to continuous critical scrutiny so that it can oppose the paralyzing effects emanating from the institutionalization of both academia and activism.”

Although I can identify with this general sentiment, I agree with their analysis in that, “collaboration itself poses a theoretical challenge to and potential for rethinking transnational feminist frameworks by creating new spaces for political and intellectual initiatives beyond disciplinary borders, academic artist/activist divides, and North/South dichotomies.”

Conclusion: “Mixing” in the Kitchen

As a participant observer in various collaborative songwriting moments — in Chiapas, Los Angeles, and Veracruz — I have witnessed time and again how collective songwriting can create space, build community, challenge multiple patriarchal systems, and potentially produce knowledge that is accessible beyond the academy. For Entre Mujeres, convivencia in the kitchen facilitated a trust that prompted discussions on music, love, mothering, politics, and overall life experience. The knowledge and theory produced through testimonios was transformed into collective dreams and shaped into sung theories. The Entre Mujeres project used recording technology in order to document these important music dialogues locally and across political borders. Ultimately, recording technologies as they were utilized by women across borders advanced conversations and provided new spaces for Chicana and Jarocha musician mothers and women.

Although I have stressed the importance of the “real time” or the process of collective songwriting, I want to also note that the archives or sung theories are an important element, especially when one considers them over time. After all, our inevitable mortality impedes us from engaging in these processes from one generation to the next. Recordings or lyrics of these songs stand to be remembered,

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440 Ibid.
reconstructed, critiqued or honored by future generations. Ultimately, it is both community in real time as well as the archive that shapes new consciousness, and initiates what bell hooks calls a “collective falling in love.”\footnote{b. hooks, Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989), 26.} For “as we work to be loving, to create a culture that celebrates life, that makes love possible, we move against dehumanization, against domination.”\footnote{Ibid.} In all of these ways, \textit{Entre Mujeres} mixed more than music in the kitchen; we mixed souls and began a process toward imagining and creating something different through words and music across borders, disrupting how we understand music, its purpose, and who gets to create it.

\section*{THE SEATTLE FANDANGO PROJECT}

\subsection*{From Xalapa to Los Angeles to Seattle}

We arrived in Los Angeles from Veracruz, June of 2008. We had given up our apartment, but thanks to the generosity of our landlord, we managed to keep our belongings in the garage of our old place, while we rented a room from a friend in Highland Park. We spent the summer visiting friends and family. While we were in Xalapa, the rest of the band had taken up projects with other music groups but we would still gig in and around Los Angeles. The Smithsonian Folkways agreed to fund our next album and we began to write new material as well as gather songs that we had previously composed.

My partner had also begun to produce other musical groups and singers. Artists as far away as Australia, such as an M.C. named Maya Jupiter, sought to have Flores produce her album. I too helped with some of the songwriting, and vocal and music arrangements. Once the summer was over, we packed our belongings in a U-Haul and my partner began to make the long drive to Seattle, WA.\footnote{Our mentor and good friend Russell Rodriguez rode with Flores from Los Angeles CA. to Seattle, WA.} Two days later, Sandino and I flew into Seattle.

\subsection*{Arriving in Seattle}
L.A. was far behind us as we drove through downtown from the airport. There was a mixture of excitement and sadness that enveloped our little family. I had learned to make light of everything for my son’s sake no matter how I was feeling. Pointing out the Space needle to my son, I realized we had been to Seattle, WA, many times over the years as Quetzal tours brought us into Seattle proper and the surrounding areas such as Kent and Kirkland. This time we were here to stay for a while. I had been accepted into the Ph.D. program in the Womens Studies Department.\textsuperscript{444} Graduate school was the last place I ever thought music practice would take me but, then again, my experience in East L.A. Chican@\textsuperscript{445} artivista communities made me acknowledge the possibilities for important study, analysis and documentation that made my interest in graduate school peak and culminated in my applying.

Far From Home: \textit{Fandango as a Community Building Tool}

Besides the rigor and pace of a graduate program, the most difficult aspect to get use to in the Seattle area was the weather and the lack of friends and family around us. One afternoon, after completing my first quarter, we looked around at our little apartment and wondered why we had gone so far. I felt terribly lonely. We soon began to reach out to some of the people we knew in the area to convene, to play or to connect in some way.

The first person we reached out to was Francisco Orozco, who was an old friend from the Bay Area. Orozco was an ethnomusicology graduate student in the School of Music at the UW. He had some experience with \textit{son jarocho} as well as \textit{fandango}. Orozco informed us that there were other people in the Seattle area that knew aspects of \textit{son jarocho} and/or \textit{fandango}.\textsuperscript{446}

My partner, Flores, obtained a job as Program Coordinator for the American Music Partnership of Seattle (AMPS). Flores was to oversee to the execution and collaboration of the partnership, which consisted of: the Experience Music Project (EMP), KEXP Radio, and the University of Washington, Seattle. UW School of Music Professor

\textsuperscript{444} The Department has since been renamed, the Gender, Women, and Sexualities Studies Department (GWSS).
\textsuperscript{445} My advisor, Michelle Habell Pallán, and I met at a gig in 2006 on the UCSC campus. Our children started playing together. I had been tossing about the idea of going back to school and mentioned it to her in passing. She suggested I apply to the University of Washington.
\textsuperscript{446} Orozco had brought \textit{Son De Madera} once to perform in Washington Hall in Capital Hill prior to our arrival. This visit, however, did not involve an elaboration or teaching of \textit{fandango}. They came as a performance group.
Shannon Dudley was the chair of AMPS and he approached Flores about implementing any kind of project that would connect the AMPS partnership to local communities through music. Flores immediately suggested fandango as a community building tool.\footnote{Professor Dudley had previously met Flores in Seattle during a performance at Meany Hall called, “Fandango sin Fronteras,” which was a collaboration between Quetzal and Floricanto U.S.A. Flores also spoke of the practice of fandango in a panel that Dudley had organized during this visit. Both through a master’s thesis by Francisco Orozco and the “Fandango sin Fronteras” performance, Professor Dudley had heard of fandango, but had never experienced fandango, nor conceived of the kind of community impact it could have.}

Although there were some people that had experience with the son jarocho in the Seattle area, no one had taught the fandango protocols. Between Flores and I, we were able to teach the community of students on and off campus, the entire music and dance protocol that was needed to be able to participate in fandango. Through the Simpson Center, the University of Washington provided some funding for Flores to buy supplies to build a tarima in our little student housing apartment, which we later transferred to the music building. Professor Dudley committed to providing a space for us in the Music School. The goal was to get UW students and the surrounding community involved in the learning and ethics of fandango practice. In the Spring of 2009, with Sandino in tow, we gathered every Monday night to teach and discuss the fandango practice. By this time, we had gathered extensive information and experience in the practice that allowed us to teach basic fandango protocols. Although we did not claim an expertise, we had arrived to Seattle with a reputation as accomplished musicians as part of Quetzal and word spread that we had also studied with some of the most respected elders in the fandango tradition. Both through our reputation as well as through our demonstration of the practice and playing of fandango, we earned the trust of students whom we began to share the basic tenants of the practice.

The fandango instruction that we provided on campus that quarter and into the Summer term was not through a registered UW course. Flores and I volunteered our time and sought to create the “come one come all” type of gathering. With the help of Orozco and other community people that had some experience with the son jarocho, such as Iris Viveros and Eduardo Sierra, word spread of fandango workshops around campus and in the community. Soon, a critical mass began to form.\footnote{The first taller we taught with the instruments that were available. Since I was instructing on the zapateado I would lend out my jarana and marimbol for the duration of the taller. Flores owned three jaranas, and Sierra would bring his own. Orozco owned a jarana, requinto and a marimbol. Among us all we had enough instruments to teach but we}
Personally, Monday nights became a relief from the loneliness we felt being non-Seattle natives. Students from different disciplines as well as community people and families from the surrounding areas began to show up to learn *fandango* and to be together. My son, Sandino, had a flurry of children to play with. Soon room 313 in the Music building felt like a community space, a home away from home for us on the UW campus.

In teaching the basic *sones*, dance and strumming of the instruments of the *son jarrocho*, Flores was adamant on consistently emphasizing the *fandango* as the *most* important aspect of the practice. During our two month pit-stop in Los Angeles before we moved to Seattle, we witnessed how *fandango* practice in L.A. had been somewhat abandoned. Many practitioners had been empowered by *fandango*, but, as I mentioned earlier, unfortunately began to spend most of their energies taking to the stage. Again, I believe that the impetus to learn music is enjoyable, cathartic and empowering, especially in *fandango* practice. However, when the empowerment and understanding of *fandango* becomes distorted, novice practitioners often begin to form performance groups that solely aspire to play on stage. What happens next is that the original intention of *fandango* as a community practice looses importance. *Fandango*, then, becomes a logical stepping-stone toward professional music practice.

We had seen this happen time and again in Los Angeles. For this reason, Flores and I were clear that the *fandango* communities that we participated in retain *convivencia* at the center. In our practice with the Seattle Fandango Project, we consistently reiterated that the goal of knowing the practice of *fandango* and building on the skills and knowledge base of the practice, was to better participate in *fandango* as a community practice. Our role as experienced *fandangueros* was not to inform subjects on the practice to make them professional musicians, but rather to inform on the practice in order to instill the know-how and sense of *convivencia* through music. Centering *convivencia* leaves no other goal but to reach one’s sense of humanity through participatory music and dance practice. The reiterative discourse of *fandango* as a community building practice was thus a teaching anthem in our *talleres* straight away.

opened up the possibility for others to bring their own instruments to jam with. Participants would often bring violins, classical guitars, cellos, ukuleles etc.
There is a difference between playing the *son jarocho* on stage and playing in *fandango*. The democratization of music practice as it is articulated in *fandango* is not the same discourse as one would take up when considering the stage. Furthermore, the original intention, struggle and resurgence of *fandango* practice in communities by *El Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero* become lost in the shuffle. Often, novices empowered by the practice have often soured the *Nuevo Movimiento* efforts by forming low quality performance groups that seek paid gigs, notoriety, and social capital. When poor representations of *son jarocho* are exhibited on the stage, issues of representation and accountability to the *maestros* in Veracruz must take precedence. Although a good or bad performance on stage is subjective, in the end, if a *fandango* practitioner decides to take the music to the stage they must be open to the possibility of being held to a professional standard, and thus critiqued as the musicians they claim to be by inhabiting the performance space.449

**The UW and the Seattle Fandango Project**

*Fandango* workshops in the Music Building with *Son De Madera* circa October 2010 (author’s personal collection).

To support and expand the work we were already doing with the *fandango* classes, a budget was created by Flores and Professor Dudley in order to invite *Son De Madera* for a ten week residency. In the middle of this planning, Professor Dudley had to

relinquish the role as Principle Investigator on the AMPS grant, turning it over to the Simpson Center for the Humanities.\textsuperscript{450} This move marginalized the plans and budget of SFP. The Simpson Center decided that it would open the money up to other projects and interests across the entire UW campus. Instead of the grant money funding for SFP as originally intended in Professor Dudley’s proposal, there was an open call for proposals. In the end, SFP received twenty percent of the original budget.\textsuperscript{451} With or without the funds, the \textit{talleres} on the UW campus were already in full swing and we were still able to make plans to bring \textit{Son De Madera} for a short residency.

For the last day of instruction at the end of Spring quarter and before Son De Maderas visit, I suggested a voluntary potluck to celebrate the end of the quarter. My partner Flores and I would have class as usual and then we would have a bit of food and sweets for those who were willing to bring a dish to share. On the last day of instruction, as we approached room 313, I could hear the chatter of people and the strumming of \textit{jaranas}. As we entered the classroom, I found a table full of food and drink. Participants were accustomed by then to greeting each other with a hug and a kiss. The music, families and children running about warmed my heart. That night, as we drove home, I remember vividly commenting to my partner on the complete change of energy I felt. Our lives were suddenly different in Seattle. Through the sharing of \textit{fandango} practice we had become closer to many. We felt an element of home.

\textbf{The School of Music and Women Studies} 

Before \textit{Son De Madera}’s arrival, we had committed to expanding the community. Flores, Orozco, Viveros, Sierra, and I expanded SFP to conduct workshops in West Seattle and the Beacon Hill areas. Quickly community centers such as Youngstown Cultural Arts Center and Centro de La Raza became sites of instruction that garnered a critical mass and attendance of multiracial, transgenerational communities. By the time \textit{Son De Madera} arrived for their month long visit, there was a substantial interest in and curiosity about \textit{fandango} practice in the area.

\textsuperscript{450} The Simpson Center for the Humanities is one of the largest and most comprehensive humanities centers in the United States for more information see, \url{http://depts.washington.edu/uwch/about}. 
\textsuperscript{451} Oral history interview (Los Angeles CA.: January 5, 2013).
Professor Dudley from the School of Music, along with Flores were instrumental in garnering and advocating for the financial support from the Simpson Center through AMPS funds, which allowed for the building of the tarimas to be used in the Youngstown Cultural Arts Center, and Centro de La Raza in Beacon Hill. As SFP grew and a demand for instruments became a necessity, it was decided to spend some of the funds on instruments to meet the demand of the increasing number of participants. These would be instruments that the UW would own but that students could borrow and check out during the talleres.

Flores reached out from the network of instrument and string makers in the fandango sin fronteras network. The decision to “spread the love” or the economic resources was very important. As the network involves more than one laudero or instrument maker, Flores carefully decided to provide an opportunity for as many lauderos as possible. The final instrument order was distributed as follows: from Tacho Utrera (Los Utrera), SFP ordered three jaranas and a leona grande; and from Ramon Gutierrez (Son de Madera), they ordered three jaranas and two requintos to start. Having more instruments present in the talleres sparked an interest in students who eventually began to order and purchase their own instruments directly from the lauderos.

Additionally, after having witnessed the potential of fandango as a community building practice, El Centro de La Raza also applied for a grant through the City Office of Art and Culture of Seattle that allowed for the purchase of a requinto, a leona and seven jaranas. Again, the outgoing resources were distributed to lauderos and musicians within the fandango sin fronteras network. Alfredo “Godo” Gonzalez-Herrera and Cesar Castro made instruments for this order.

In addition to Professor Dudley’s support, Professor Michelle Habell-Pallan, who is tenured in the Women Studies Department, was also instrumental in advocating for the support of SFP by proposing a lecture series and related events during Son De Madera’s residency. Recognizing the important role women play in fandango practice, Professor

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452 Recycling money into the community is an important artivista praxis. A philosophy that can be seen in the methodologies utilized in other arenas such as in the annual Anti-malls that happen all over Los Angeles organized by 1997 Encuentro organizer Laura Palomares and her organization El Puente Hacia La Esperanza. For more information see, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv1wnly_ohs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv1wnly_ohs).

453 The grant language did not technically allow for the center to “purchase instruments” but rather to “rent” them. They “rented” them from Flores who then concretely “donated” them to Centro de La Raza.
Pallan secured funds for a lecture series and events that she and I organized titled, “Alma en La Tarima.” The goals of the series were to highlight the important role that women play in fandango, and to continue to reiterate the social justice implications in the praxis of dance rooted in community that extends into other areas of the panelists’ respective works. The series panelists included Rubi Oseguera Rueda (Veracruz, Mexico), Carolina Sarmiento (Santa Ana, CA), Laura Marina Rebolloso (Veracruz, Mexico), Marisol Berrios Miranda (Puerto Rico), Teresita Bazán (Oaxaca/Mexico City), Iris Viveros (Xalapa/Veracruz) and myself.

The transnational network of fandangueros and our involvement in fandango sin fronteras enabled an immediate rapport with the jarocho communities that allowed SFP to expedite the invitations and working relationships needed to make Son De Madera’s visit a success. After a short break at the end of Spring quarter, we continued to teach through the Summer at all of the sites in preparation for Son De Madera’s visit.

**SFP Performance Group or Son Tequio**

As part of SFP, a performance group developed in order to pull practitioners into the different taller sites taking place all over Seattle. Although this was a point of contention for Flores and I, the goal was to pique people’s interest in the practice so that they would then attend the talleres. This helped our recruitment but it also led to requests for more performance-oriented presentations. In all these performance moments, we collectively agreed that we needed to stress who we were as a group and our goals. These invitations ranged from political demonstrations, school assemblies, food sovereignty events, and Día de Los Muertos celebrations. The small amounts of pay from these events created the “el cochinito” fund. The pay for these events was put into the cochinito fund to advance SFP goals.

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454 Leaving ones’ soul on the tarima. The title of the speaking series comes from the expression a woman utters when she has exhausted herself physically in zapateado and all at once senses a near spiritual moment in the process. Translated literally, it means, “leaving one’s soul on the tarima.” Upon having this cathartic moment in the presence and with the help of other bailadoras or female dancers, musicians and community, this moment is especially significant in that it is the community that has contributed to one’s happiness. In this sense, it is not an isolated individualistic venture for satisfaction but a community effort to reach this climactic moment.

455 There was a total of three panel discussions that took place during the 2009-2010 year.

456 The name Son Téquio was also used as a way to not confuse the performance aspect of the son jarocho with the ethics and convivencia of fandango.

457 “Cochinito” in Spanish language literally means “little pig” and we used it to refer to our “piggy bank.”
The SFP performance group was sometimes known as *Son Tequío*. *Tequío* was a term introduced by Teresita Bazán, who is an SFP community member. Originally from Oaxaca via Mexico City, Teresita offered the term, which means “work” or “tribute” in the Zapotec language for the performance group name.

Important to note were some of the tensions that began to surface concerning stage performances done by members of *Son Téquío*. The members of SFP who could stay in tune or dance in time were often the members chosen by more experienced members (myself and Flores included) to participate in *Son Téquío* as an effort toward outreach. Novice students, if not completely offended, were often bothered for not being considered. We often had to remind those who were offended for not being invited to perform that aspiring to be on stage was never part of the goal of learning the practice of *fandango* to begin with. We had to explain that the stage and the *fandango* are two very separate spaces that required different kinds of skills. Indeed, this created tension and at times *Son Téquío* was jokingly referred to as “the VIP’s”.*458* The “cochinito fund” generated by *Son Téquío* continues to support SFP efforts and activities.

**First *Fandango* in the Pacific Northwest**

On October 30, 2009, after the month-long artist residency by *Son De Madera* that included Ramon Gutierrez, Rubi Oseguera Rueda, Tereso Vega, and Juan Perez from East L.A., we had the first *fandango* in Seattle at the Vera Project. *459* The *fandango* was a huge success as it brought together various communities within the UW and beyond. Students and their families from the different sites as well as students from the University of Washington gathered to participate and witness for the first time a *fandango* in the Pacific Northwest. *Fandangueros* from El Centro Cultural De Santana (*Los Santaneros*) made the time and the effort to trek to Seattle to perform and participate in the *fandango*. The Vera Project *fandango* was a sort of baptism inducting the Pacific Northwestern

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*458* It was difficult to transition from *fandango* teacher espousing the importance of *convivencia* in *fandango*, to professional musician who has a strict criteria as to which members are able to handle being on stage.

*459* Footage of the first *fandango* in Seattle Washington can be seen at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZuJ4DEJnKE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZuJ4DEJnKE)
guardianes into the transnational networks by representatives from Mexico, East L.A.

To add to the excitement and momentum that Son De Madera’s visit had generated, The Vera Project fandango was followed by a two quarter long visit from Laura Marina Rebolloso (co-founder of Son De Madera and wife of Ramon Gutierrez). Rebolloso’s time in Seattle solidified the influence of master musicianship in music, zapateado, and voice instruction that Son De Madera had established. An experienced instructor for children, young people, and adults alike, Rebolloso’s visiting professorship in the School of Music has become legendary. Her presence and generous teaching style pulled many more fandango practitioners onto the tarima. Although Rebolloso’s time and teaching efforts in Seattle communities were compensated, other than the visiting professorship title, she nonetheless took the time to teach the community of SFP.\footnote{Thanks in part to the advocacy and efforts of Professor Shannon Dudley, Rebolloso’s three children were able to also spend time in Seattle. They also became part of the community and were showered with love and support from the SFP community.}

**Community as the Key Force in the Success of SFP**

The core reason for SFP’s success, and what has continued to drive the project to this very day, has been the involvement and ethical direction that the surrounding communities of West Seattle, Beacon Hill, and White Center (to name a few) had on the project. These communities have been the soul and engine that continue to generate new constituencies and communities into this liberatory practice. During and well after our time in the Seattle area, the community took hold of the project and made it their own.

Without community involvement, SFP would not exist let alone thrive. That is to say that, SFP would not be as successful were it not for the community involvement and support. This awareness has lead to tensions in the relationships between the University of Washington and the fandango community at large. The University of Washington provided SFP with initial and important financial and logistical support to facilitate bringing Son De Madera and Laura Marina Rebolloso as well as purchasing much needed instruments. While there is a sense of gratitude from SFP, the community also understands the importance of their presence and creative labor and how their support
provides an invaluable resource that could not have made the project as successful as it has been. This is key to the practice and understanding of fandango. This relationship (money and institutional support versus critical mass and community involvement) has been a constant negotiation between the community and the UW concerning the existence and workings of SFP.

One of the most unique aspects of SFP, one that I feel has kept the ethics of fandango alive, is that professors, students and those who have been connected to the UW have been held accountable by the community time and again. Whether through publications, museum exhibits, demonstrations or anything having to do with SFP, the community has manifested their right to have a voice in how they are being represented. There is an informal check and balance system in SFP that has been part of the development of the project from the onset. Through email correspondence via listserves and social media, the communities of fandangueros not only inform each other of different gigs, demonstrations, classroom presentations and community events, but they also bring up important issues of representation and power dynamics.

As the most visible connection between the UW and SFP, tenured Professors Shannon Dudley and Michelle Habell-Pallan have often had to answer to the community for the actions taken by the University of Washington, or publications that have surfaced that represent SFP’s history and philosophy. Although SFP participants are not all on the same page in terms of what is important to check and balance, the tradition of questioning the University of Washington for their actions is part of the relationships in place that I believe reflect the ethics and understanding of fandango practice. It is the tradition of questioning that is important to recognize. This tradition of questioning underscores how SFP has contributed to the learning process for students and faculty at the university through which academic thought and praxis are challenged and improved. Most significantly, this process has fundamentally challenged people’s core beliefs concerning power, community and personal accountability held by all participants.

Film and Archiving: The Invaluable Efforts of Scott and Angelica Macklin

462 Although I consulted with many members about SFP’s history, I expect that I too will be held accountable for how I represent the community. As I have stated in the opening of this dissertation my memory work and investigation of SFP is one of many perspectives in a growing body of practitioners that will also have their say.
The multiple assets that varying people involved have brought to the project has had a tremendous impact on the success of SFP. An important tool that has supported SFP efforts has been film and documentation. University of Washington-affiliated filmmakers and archivists Scott and Angelica Macklin have been closely documenting the SFP talleres, performances and efforts since the first talleres in room 313 in the Music Building. Their close relationship and involvement in the community has been translated into multiple documentary clips that have successfully captured the struggle, beauty and efforts of SFP. Scott Macklin’s films in particular have been instrumental tools in proving the kind of critical mass and impact SFP has had on the surrounding community. For those who could not be there or were not interested enough to be there, his films have nonetheless convinced those absent from these events on both the ethics and ongoing successes of SFP. The documentaries ended up serving many functions: educational, recruitment, assessment (often required as outcomes evidence by granters) and archival documentation of the development of SFP.463

Seattle Fandango Project Still Going Strong

The Seattle Fandango Project has gone on to be recognized by both grassroots communities and art partnerships nationwide as well as by the University of Washington.464 SFP was named the recipient of the 2012 University of Washington Vice President for Minority Affairs and Vice Provost for Diversity Community Building Award. SFP as individual and active guardianes are utilizing the fandango sharing and practice in other spaces and projects related to the surrounding community, including: Seattle City Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs, Youngstown Cultural Arts Center, El Centro de La Raza, Casa Latina, FICA Capoeira Studio, Hidmo Restaurant and Community Center, Washington Hall, the Vera Project, VeMe Television, Experience Music Project, KEXP Radio, KBCS Radio, K-12 schools in King and Yakima Counties, and Acción Latina.465

464 Independently organized, Ted X Seattle organizer Scott Macklin approached me about presenting on fandango sin fronteras. In order to exercise the ethics of fandango beyond the practice, I opened up this invitation to include other members of the Seattle Fandango Project including: Quetzal Flores, Francisco Orozco (School of Ethnomusicology), Carrie Lanza (School of Social Work), Laura Rebollos (School of Music visiting artist), Kristina Clark, and Iris Viveros, (fandango community members). The TedX presentation opened up other opportunities for us to further dialogue and explore the various liberatory aspects of fandango practice.
Importantly, SFP has also garnered admiration and support from various communities in Mexico, specifically in Veracruz. Besides *Son De Madera* and Rebolloso, SFP has gone on to host other *son jarocho/fandango* groups or masters in the tradition, such as *Los Cojolites*, Patricio Hidalgo, Andres Flores, Cesar Castro, Alfredo Godo Herrera, and the leading *son jarocho* scholar Antonio Garcia-De Leon. At present, the Seattle Fandango Project continues to go strong and their reach can be felt throughout the state of Washington.\textsuperscript{466}

\textsuperscript{466}Iris Viveros along with Kristina Clark enrolled into the University of Washington. The campus was already familiar beyond the classrooms. Through SFP they had built relationships with Professor Dudley, Habell-Pallan and other professors and students alike. The experience in the project inspired them to pursue degrees concerning music and dance practice as educational, healing, and community building tools. They are both currently positive and productive forces within their respective programs and their community organizing know-how continues to inspire SFP and the UW.
CONCLUSION

“Imaginaries:” The Grammy and the Graduate Student

“Differential consciousness requires grace, flexibility, and strength: enough strength to confidently commit to a well-defined structure of identity for one hour, day, week, month, year; enough flexibility to self-consciously transform that identity according to the requisites of another oppositional ideological tactic....”

—Chela Sandoval

“...So much was taken away that “the place we live now is an idea”— and in this place new forms of identity, theory, practice, and community became imaginable.”

—Paula Gunn Allen as quoted by Chela Sandoval

It was June 2009, and we had been in the midst of composing our new album. We were still in Seattle and I sat down to put words to a harmonic idea that our bass player Juan Pérez had composed and recorded for me to listen to. Pérez had not composed on his usual instrument, the bass, but rather on a guitar like instrument called the Turbo Didley. The Turbo Didley was built from recycled parts that consisted of a wooden Cuban cigar-box and a metal resonator for the body of the instrument. The resulting sound of this unlikely instrument was the epitome of a man and machine balance. To me, the sound and make of the instrument was reminiscent of a Chicana artivista existence. Like the Turbo, artivistas are creating new sounds and creative conceptions from unlikely parts. Using music as dialectic tools, our differential consciousness has allowed us to navigate between and among worlds. We have recognized how music and other forms of creative expression can be liberatory tools and how these tools can be harnessed collectively to escape the arranged social relations of music to move into a different mode of consciousness and existence. The Turbo and the artivista are both hybrid creatures in their own worlds.

469 Ibid.
As I sat down to compose to the sound of the Turbo, I had Emma Perez’s book, *The Decolonial Imaginaries: Writing Chicanas Into History* (1999), bumping in my head. Having taken a Chicana feminist theory course with Professor Habell-Pallan in the Fall of 2009, I was still high on the material we had been assigned. These two factors, coupled with the feelings of the final night of the *fandango taller* at the UW, inspired the lyrics to "Imaginaries":

A shift a move a surge we feel and manifest
Slide from uncertainty and lunge into intent
Interminable imaginaries guided by ancestor’s strength
abide by no one’s government
"We below and to the left"471
More
We see more
Whose life is this for?

Global affinities, we work within our trenches
We make love through local intentions
Slow, chaotic and slow
but that seed you forgot you sowed
Is one day a seed guarding you from the cold and more.
We see more
From margin to the core.

Will slowly build
Will slowly build
Imaginaries
Imaginaries
Imaginaries
Now!

“Imaginaries” outlines a differential consciousness, a community mindset and process that can range from "uncertainty" to "manifest." In the first verse, I wanted to demonstrate how experimentation, dialogue, and quite possibly fear, are all intertwined in

471 “We below and to the left” is a common phrase that is used by the Zapatistas before they sign-off on communiqués. Poetically charged, “below and to the left” is in reference to where the real “left” should reside, just as the human heart does, “below and to the left” in the chest cavity.
social movement processes. Feelings of doubt and uncertainty converge and are present before the possibility of change. I reference the plurality or "interminable imaginaries" of voices in community practice that exist and must be taken into account. That is to say, dialogue and consensus must be mediated daily, something I had witnessed not only in SFP’s inception but in other spaces such as the Centro Regeneracion. Again, the process or attempts to reach consensus do not adhere to uniformity in terms of vision, but rather consensus work helps us reach the goal of shaping "a world in which there is room for many worlds."472

The second verse of “Imaginaries” speaks to the importance of building alliances in other regions and/or across borders with other communities in struggle without loosing sight of living and thriving on local scales. I wanted to demystify the notion that being in “community” means being perpetually harmonious and void of conflict. When in reality working intimately with a community in reaching a goal is "slow, chaotic, and slow." Ultimately, the goal is to sow seeds that one day become the fruit of our labors and the trees "guarding you from the cold and more."473

Indeed, as we have moved from place to place, from Veracruz, Mexico, to graduate school in Seattle, Washington, we too — my partner and I — have taken the tools we have learned with local and translocal communities and shared them with others along the way. As a “self-consciously organizing resistance, identity, praxis, and coalition under contemporary U.S., late-capitalist cultural conditions”,474 Chican@ artivistas methods adhere nicely to a differential consciousness, or what úúúú calls “La Facultad.”475 In the opening passage of my conclusion, Chicana feminist theorist Chela Sandoval describes the “grace, flexibility, and strength” to which a differential consciousness is required. Artivistas in EastLos and the differential modes by which they utilize their creative expression and mediums continue to facilitate an identity, theory and practice that have cultivated and sustained a community.

472 Zapatistas through Subcommander Marcos as qtd by C. Sandoval. Methodology of the Oppressed (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), x.
473 “From the cold and more” was in reference to not only the Seattle weather but “cold” as in reference to feelings of loneliness.
474 Fredric Jameson as quoted by C. Sandoval in Methodology of The Oppressed (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 61.
475 G. Anzaldúa as quoted by C. Sandoval in Methodology of The Oppressed (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 61.
In the last verse, I was reminded of *artivista* efforts of the late 90’s, and how different artists and community organizers have continued to create and thrive in the present. In this way, their efforts have not been solely confined to one’s youth movement. These methods learned in our youth have not lost credibility as we have aged and are confronted with the "real world" of raising families and having to make ends meet as "adults." After many years and in their own ways, *artivistas* have continued to build *como y cuando pueden.*

Felicia Montes, Marisol Torres, Laura Palomares, Jose Ramirez, Gabriel Tenorio, Yaolt Mazatl, Nuke and many others have gone on to develop their individual careers but most importantly they continue to engage in participatory creative work. One of the most prominent examples has been the work of Felicia Montes, who has made the annual *Mujeres de Maiz* one of the most celebrated events in East L.A. Women of color from all parts of the city attend this important event to share and partake in the creative work of other women. Montes describes the work of *Mujeres de Maiz* (MDM) as “a spiritual *artivist* collective.” Furthermore, MDM has built a strong alliance with other communities and artists, such as self-defined Tamil Shrilankan-American Queer-Trans political theatre artist “D-Lo.”

The Anti-Mall spearheaded by Laura Palomares is another annual community building event that has become a staple of East L.A. Drawing “conscious consumers,” Palomares’s efforts bring thousands of people together but most importantly generates an awareness and discourse around consumption, capitalism, money recycling and fair trade. KPFK 90.7 “Uprising” host Sonali Kolhotkar says of the event:

“It’s at a time when everyone is out holiday shopping and it’s so much nicer when people are able to spend their hard earned dollars in their own communities instead of giving to corporations like Walmart or Amazon or whatever. People

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476 How and when they are able to. I have interviewed many *artivistas* and all have expressed a certain lament in being confronted with aging and not having the time anymore to engage as they use to. However, they have also expressed the many ways in which they continue to be connected to not only maintaining some of the established *artivistas* activities, but also to participate in new community struggles, as well as mentorship of youth in the community. In this way, they have not “retired” into anonymity but rather stay connected, accessible and accountable to the current youth community of *artivistas*.


479 Ibid.

480 “Anti-Mall People b4 Profit” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--YBTAg0UH1K8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--YBTAg0UH1K8) (Accessed May 8, 13).
that come to the Anti-Mall know that the vendors are chosen because of their consciousness, based on their concern for social justice...because of their relevance and place within community.\footnote{Ibid.}

*Mujeres de Maiz* and The Anti-Mall both generate important discussions in the community, and serve as a meeting ground for *artivistas* of all ages and generations. When I attend, I know that I can expect to see familiar faces in the community out celebrating, but most importantly I see the unfamiliar faces experiencing for the first time the energy of the *artivista* community in East Los Angeles. To me, the new faces are proof of the relevance of these events.

**The Grammy Nomination**

“Imaginaries” came to be the title track for the fifth *Quetzal* album released on the *Smithsonian Folkways* label that subsequently was nominated for, of all things, a Grammy Award.\footnote{The Simpson Center for the Humanities. “Congrats to Grammy-Nominated Quetzal” http://depts.washington.edu/uwch/news/2012/12/congrats-grammy-nominated-quetzal (Accessed March 29, 13).} Being nominated for a Grammy at this stage of our careers as musicians and community organizers was not necessarily “a dream come true,” or rather it did not necessarily make us believe we had finally “made it.” Although grateful for the recognition, it was like having Santa Claus come to your home when you do not really believe in him anymore. The lack of belief is not from a place of jaded indifference. The idea is nice to think about, but Santa Claus at this point in our adult lives has been demystified.

Nevertheless, as word spread of *Quetzal* being nominated many old friends and community people bombarded us through Facebook, emails and texts. Streams of messages poured in congratulating us and stating things like, “It’s about time they recognized you guys!!” and “You fucking deserve it! These kinds of comments along with remarks like, “I have been following you guys since, “Chicana Skies”\footnote{One of the most popular tunes by Quetzal, “Chicana Skies” is on our debut album released in 1998.} and “I cried when I heard you were nominated because this music needs to be recognized!” were in short, overwhelming. Listeners that followed us from the earliest days of Centro Regeneración were taking ownership of *Quetzal*’s nomination. The triumphant comments and sentimental reactions ushered us into celebrating it for ourselves. Understanding the
importance of this nomination, in terms of industry and community, Flores decided that we should leverage this moment and focus on the bigger picture.

**Pre-Grammy Party**

As an unprecedented number of *son jarocho* influenced projects had been nominated, we wanted to bring attention to how these groups related to each other.484 *Los Cojolites* and *Sistema Bomb* were two of the three nominees along with *Quetzal*, groups related in some way or another to the efforts of *El Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero* (mentioned in chapter four). Furthermore, most had known each other through *Fandango sin Fronteras* networks. In attempts to celebrate with community and as a way to have the public recognize the importance of the relationships that give rise to music making efforts, Flores along with Gabriel Tenorio organized a *fandango* at the East Side Café as well as a Pre-Grammy party.485 Both events were a huge success.

The Pre-Grammy party was held at the historic Breed Street Shul in Boyle Heights. Tenorio, Musicians Corps project manager and Guadalupe Custom Strings co-owner, had been working closely with the historic site. Located in the heart of Boyle Heights, great efforts were underway by the Friends of the Breed Street Shul to restore the site. The Shul itself was still under renovation so we had the Pre-Grammy party in the multi-purpose room. The goal was to gather community musicians that had been nominated for a Grammy at one point or another in their careers. Musicians such as *Los Cojolites*, Raul “El Bully” Pacheco (*Ozomatli*), Louise Perez (*Los Lobos*), “La Marisoul” (*La Santa Cecilia*) and *Jarocho* musician Andres Flores (*Chuchumbe*) were some of the artists that agreed to participate. Furthermore, we were all from East L.A. and tied to the community of *fandangueros* and *son jarocho*.

Cultural theorists and academics that had been writing about the East L.A. music and art scene were also present. The night was inspiring as reflections from Russell Rodriguez, George Lipsitz, Victor Hugo Viesca, Michelle Habell-Pallan, Josh Kun, Greg Landau, and Roberto Flores shared their thoughts concerning music and community with


us all. The crowd consisted of new and familiar faces. From the days of the PRC to the *fandango*’s of present day, we filled the Shul to its maximum capacity and some were turned away. As Russell Rodriguez later stated:

“The night was a joyous and magical gathering of music, thoughts, food, friendship, and *convivencia*. And the desire for *Quetzal* to want to share their celebration with their family, friends, and neighbors, clearly demonstrates where their heart is, where they get inspiration, where they write and compose, where they represent, and where they live — in their community.”

The Trophy: Instrument of Illusion

On February 10, 2013, at about 1:30pm we sat in the Nokia Theater in Downtown L.A. waiting for the Grammy award announcements. Days before, we had been through both the Pre-Grammy *fandango* and the Pre-Grammy party. We had also just spent hours walking down the red carpet. Needless to say, we were *desvelados* and exhausted overall. As we sat waiting for the category of Best Latin/Rock, Urban or Alternative album winners to be announced, we looked around in awe at all of the great musicians that kept walking by. Bonnie Raitt, Esperanza Spalding and Chick Korea were but a few of the great musicians and songwriters that we had seen as we sat waiting.

Our category finally came up and they announced the winner. We won! But, it took me a while for the win to register. The presenter mispronounced both the name of our band (*Quetzal*) and the title of the album (“Imaginaries”). As I waited to make sense of what the announcer had said, our percussionist Alberto Lopez stood up and yelled, “*No mames!*” As I tried to decipher what the announcer said, Lopez was already out in the isle and walking towards the stage. Flores called out, “Get up, Martha, we won!” I was still in disbelief since I could not get over the mispronunciation, but nonetheless slowly began to rise out of my seat and scoot out into the corridor. As we made our way down to the stage, I could hear *Los Cojolites* cheering for us as we walked by. Running down the corridor Tylana (*Quetzal*’s violinist) turned back to me and asked, “What are you going to say honey?!” I was in complete shock. After all of these years, who knew

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486 “It was a foot stomping pre-Grammy concert,” https://breedstreetshul.org/it-was-a-foot-stomping-pre-grammy-concert/ (Accessed April 2, 13).
488 Sleep-deprived.
489 No way! Stop kidding!
this moment would come? As I was handed the Grammy, I began to think back at all the past Quetzal members and collective moments of struggle. Besides being grateful to the current Quetzal members, past Quetzales came into focus. I thanked my brother Gabriel Gonzalez, Rocio Marron, Edson Gianesi, Dante Pascuzzo and Camilo Landau were the first names that came to me. I, then, mentioned our transnational community of musicians in the son jarocho fandagüero world like Son De Madera and Los Cojolites. Although it felt like an eternity being up there, before you knew it, it was over and we were ushered backstage.

What happened next was hilarious. As we went through the wings, a well-dressed woman was waiting for us. She took the Grammy from my hands and said, “This stays here. It’s a prop.” As we walked through a media center, they repeatedly gave us a Grammy and then took it from us. In every photograph of us taken by the media, I have a different Grammy in my hands. That night we went home without one. Era el colmo!

I thought about my father and what he would have thought about this moment. This process was both redemptive and sobering. It was an affirmation of what the music industry must strive to be and the great lengths they go through to construct the fairytale for an audience. I walked through the well-oiled machine that day. The Grammy Awards is a highly organized event, and I witnessed how the wheels turned. As we walked through the media frenzy, we were thrilled, honored and mostly in disbelief that after all of these years we were standing in the Staples Center as Grammy winners. But, there was also a sobering truth to it all.

I’ve been called a “party pooper,” or “hater” by the way in which I describe this moment. I believe that these kinds of reactions are due to the fact that when we speak the truth we taint people’s understandings and dreams and perceptions of a moment like this. But, this is precisely the importance of respectfully speaking openly about these moments. The truth is that the Grammy, although recognizably important on a symbolic front, can also be seen as an illusion that the industry has constructed as a measure of “success.” The reality for musicians (even the most accomplished) is much different. I know former Grammy winners (including myself) that struggle with health insurance and maintaining


\[\text{It was the ultimate irony.}\]
a steady income. Meanwhile, record companies busy themselves with getting rich and trying to find new ways to gouge artists from their earnings, and artistic and intellectual property rights. We can not forget stories about a host of genius musicians that compromised their sound, neglected their families, and exhausted themselves on the road only to end up penniless or on the street with no recourse.492

Reflecting on all of the love and well wishes we have received from various community members concerning the Grammy nomination, none was as gratifying and as telling of the lives we lead as Chican@ musicians from East Los as the cell phone call we received from community musician legend (and Flores’s first teacher) Lorenzo “Lencho” Martinez. In a quintessential, thick East L.A. Chuco suave accent, he said:

“Hey Flaco493, just want to say congratulations on your win. Welcome to the club (He laughs). 494 We know that this doesn’t change our existence. We know what we’re all about. We continue to do what we do with or without it. We live, we play, and then...we die. Eso es todo. Nothing more, nothing less. Ok saludos a la familia, Ay te watcho cucaracho!”495

As Lencho indicates, although the bells and whistles of the Grammy celebration and attention were exciting, there was an element of a musician’s reality that I could not forget. Regardless, we understand it behooves Quetzal to leverage this moment as the Grammy often validates your past, on going and future work to those who are invested in these processes as well as our own community of listeners. Although Quetzal’s music navigates both community and industry worlds, as workers we now stand to make more money per gig. Some would say, this could not be all that bad, right?

“Imaginaries”: Insurgent Pedagogies Now

“At the turn of the millennium, it was easy to recognize the imperializing nature of transnational capitalism: it crosses all borders, it colonizes and subjectifies all citizens on different terms than ever before. . . It is also imperative not to lose sight of the methods of the oppressed that were developed under previous modes of colonization, conquest, enslavement, and domination, for these are the guides necessary for establishing effective

492 There have been many artists, but the ones that come to mind are the prolific Motown bass player James Jameson and the singer Mary Wells. Although they helped define the Motown sound their stories are well known for the tragic way in which they both died penniless in the streets of Detroit.
493 Flaco is Spanish for “Skinny guy.”
494 Lecho has won two Grammy’s with the Tex Maniacs from Texas.
495 See you later cockroach! Cell phone message. (Los Angeles, CA), February 12, 2013.
forms of resistance, under contemporary global conditions: they are key to the imagination of “post-coloniality” in its most utopian sense.\endnote{496} 

—Chela Sandoval

I began this dissertation with my own perception of music as it was instilled by my father. Throughout the chapters and through a Chicana artivista feminist analysis, I have marked how this perception has changed over time for me and others. I have articulated how music has served as a tool for national projects, and how emotions have played a part. I stated that nations through economic and social institutions continue a colonial legacy of extracting capital from bodies.\endnote{497} Creative labor has, thus, been packaged and sold to build economic and social empires. But, most importantly, it has overtime changed the social relations of music.

In consecutive chapters, I demonstrate how Chicano artivistas challenge these ideas through varying methods as a way to arrive at a new consciousness and re-embodiment through un-incorporated creative community practices. Through these multiple communal creative practices (fandango, collective songwriting) a shift in consciousness occurs for all involved. Through these examples, relationality as fortified by convivencia ushers the formation and fortitude of communities by which dialogue and thus critical consciousness persist.

Chican@ artivistas are engaging in what seems to be an effective form of resistance. As articulated by Chela Sandoval, the methodology of the oppressed is “a set of processes, procedures, and technologies for decolonizing the imagination.”\endnote{498} Indeed, Chican@ artivista methods and forms of resistance fall under the guise of many post-colonial efforts, including social mechanisms articulated by Sandoval and other post-colonial theorists. In the midst of community dialogues and struggles, a differential conscious allowed artivistas to see art and creative expression as an all encompassing process, procedure, and social technique that instigate a shift into new imaginaries. These shifts continue to be felt in different ways in EastLos communities.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item C. Sandoval in \textit{Methodology of The Oppressed} (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 8-9.
\item Sandoval. C. Sandoval in \textit{Methodology of The Oppressed} (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 68,9.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
In my first example, the 1997 *Encuentro Chican@ e Indígena por la Humanidad y Contra el Neoliberalismo*, both Chican@ and Indígena participants engaged in dialogue and embodiment as a community exercise. Intersectional realities were discussed not solely through language but through performative and artistic interactions. Then, I demonstrated how dialogue with *jarocho* communities, especially those involved in *El Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero*, gave way to the informal translocal dialogue, *Fandango sin Fronteras*, that relies on embodied expression through participatory music and dance practice of *fandango*. Both examples were a reminder to me as a participant observer that creative expression can be generated with and amongst community, and not necessarily for the goal of reaching professional musicianship but as a way to engage in *convivencia* through music practice.

The practices of collective songwriting and *fandango* highlighted in both examples made visible to me how all art and creative expression are relational, meaning that all art and music production confer social meaning. In this way, these practices proved how a community can be shaped and/or strengthened through participatory music and other creative forms of expression. In both examples, a value in *process* rather than *outcome* shifted constituent psyches into a critical consciousness. The displacement of capital markets in the creation of music as a participatory music and dance practice intrinsically reorganizes a subject’s mind away from capitalist music conceptions inducing a counter memory that moves one to ask: where did these communal practices go? Why do we not engage in this way with each other? What keeps me from music practice? How do I get back to this way of being?

Drawing from these autobiographical ethnographic experiences, I have highlighted how these transnational/translocal methodologies have been utilized in our own local trenches. I have demonstrated, both through the *Entre Mujeres* project as well as through the collective songwriting method, that I have adapted and implemented the experience and philosophy of Chican@ *artivista* praxis. I walked the reader through the Chican@ *artivista* methods as informed by translocal communities, how they may touch down into community to instigate new hopes and imagination. Through participatory or community art practices, new imaginaries emerge as the relationships built through these practices are re-enforced and empowered by the creative process.
I have stated that through intricate meshworks that the outcomes are never predictable or quantifiable. However, the impact is eventually and undoubtedly felt. As one of many Chican@ artivistas engaged in community building through music and creative expression, these methods hold and, although there are always challenges, an emphasis on process renders labeling an outcome as having failed as obsolete.

As other theorists have noted, evaluating social movements as having “succeeded” or failed obscures the “merits or power of the visions themselves”499 there have already been many accounts of how the fandango sin fronteras movement has been “utopic” and has failed to reach social movement status. My account of Chican@ artivista methods of engaging communities and building alliances through participatory music and creative practice challenges ideas of what a “social movement” is, and redirects our perceptions of how it has been historically defined.

Artivista Methods as Critical Indigenous Pedagogy

My research and my praxis are part of a post-colonial project under the guise of critical indigenous pedagogy (CIP). Chican@ artivista processes have adhered to the criteria that CIP defines itself in the academic world. CIP must be, "ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonizing, and participatory."500 Indeed, artivista methods adhere to CIP criteria. Furthermore, artivista methods are committed to "dialogue, community, self-determination, and cultural autonomy." As CIP criteria persists, "It must meet people's perceived needs. It must resist efforts to confine inquiry to a single paradigm or interpretive strategy. It must be unruly, disruptive, critical, and dedicated to the goals of justice and equity. Such a framework lays the foundation for the decade of critical indigenous inquiry."501

As members of Quetzal or as Chican@ artivistas, my partner and I continue to share what we have learned whereever we find ourselves. We have returned to Seattle for many visits since we moved back to L.A., both to visit friends as well as to build on new projects. Most recently, we returned to engage in a collective songwriting workshop with

501 Ibid.
high school youth in Seattle public schools. The City of Seattle as well as the Seattle Fandango Project, thanks to a grant written by SFP member Alex Chadsey, funded “Sound Beyond Barriers.”\textsuperscript{502} The collective songwriting workshops were conducted with immigrant youth in the Seattle World School.\textsuperscript{503}

As I stated, educational and everyday realities “are constructed in and through people’s linguistic, cultural, social and behavioral interactions which both shape and are reshaped by social, political, economic and cultural forces.” \textsuperscript{504} For Chican@\textsuperscript{11} artivistas, it is not enough to understand the engine and effects of oppression. There is also a need to “transform it with the goal of radically democratizing educational sites and societies.” \textsuperscript{505}

Through the “Sound Beyond Barriers” project, and even before this, we have begun to address how collective songwriting can be an effective tool in the classroom for immigrant youth and other social spaces in the Seattle area. The “Sound Beyond Barriers” workshops had a visible and immediate impact on the students and educators.

**Future Scholarship**

I have initiated important discussions in this dissertation concerning music as a dialectic tool by introducing the collective songwriting method. However, a complete theoretical analysis and elaboration of the sonic influences in this method are needed, especially in reference to music created in the \textit{Entre Mujeres} project. In this dissertation, I have coined sung theories as important knowledge production generated through the collective songwriting method. I hope to elaborate on this process in the future. Another important term I wish to introduce is rhythmic intention. In particular, a musical analysis and demonstration by the ways in which rhythmic intention manifest in music practice are important to register as I suggest that rhythms as processed by the body are not just varying forms of marking time in music practice, but that they are indeed political acts rooted in a history of resistance.

\textsuperscript{502} SFP member Alex Cody Chadsey wrote a grant for the Seattle Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs. After having witnessed collective songwriting workshop given by Flores and I while on tour in a continuation High School in Houston, Texas, Chadsey had been so moved by the experience, he decided to try and find funding for us to engage in this process with Seattle youth. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeGgXTHbGvXM (Accessed on March 29, 13).

\textsuperscript{503} “Around the Schools” http://www.seattleschools.org/modules/cms/pages.phtml?pageid=291696


\textsuperscript{505} Fishman & McLaren as qtd by Denzin and Lincoln in \textit{Handbook of Critical Indigenous Methodologies}, 8.
As I have articulated throughout, *fandango* conceptualizes *convivencia* as a central aesthetic principle. One can say that, *Veracruzano* communities utilize *convivencia* as a collective production of auditory identity. A culmination of memory through sound, Spanish, African and Indigenous legacies, are present in the multiple dialogues and musical inflections. This dialogue is achieved through the various instruments of *son jarocho*, including its heartbeat or pulse, the *tarima*. *Bailadoras* are the drummers that produce the central pulse of the *fandango*, they are percussionists. Being a *bailadora* as well as a music composer, I began to conceive of the *tarima* as an instrument which led me to compose music in *Quetzal* based on the *fandango* musical and social experience, as well as from my having studied and played other African instruments such as the *chekere*, *bata* and *congas*. Describing *bailadoras* as drummers in the *fandango* tradition, I conceive of the *zapateado* dance as a *sonic experience*.\(^{506}\)

Although I do not wish to exclude dance from the riches of visual culture and the pleasure and significance of admiring a body in motion, I refer to the dance as a *sonic experience* in an attempt to clear the reader’s mind of what to expect when referencing “dance.” Also, by considering dance as an important *sound source*, I suggest that one can gain valuable insight and additional narratives within a culture’s historical hybrid trajectory. Based on this premise, I first introduced “*rhythmic intention*”\(^{507}\) in a published article titled, “Sonic (Trans) Migration of Son Jarocho Zapateado: Rhythmic Intention, Metamorphosis and Manifestation in Fandango and Performance” (2011). *Rhythmic intention* is a term that allowed me to begin an exploration of the complex social, historical and political identity of sound in relation to rhythm.

In utilizing *rhythmic intention*, I suggest that the musician or music practitioner’s “purpose” or “attitude” never abandons his/her home base, but rather *leans* towards an inflection creating a new sound. When listening to and performing *son jarocho*, one can locate the *rhythmic intentions* embodied in *son* as undeniably rooted in Spanish, Indigenous and African cultural legacies. By interrogating the *sonic* aspect of movement,

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\(^{507}\) “*Intention*” is defined by Dictionary.com\(^ {507}\) as, “purpose or attitude towards the effect of ones actions or conduct.” I draw from how we understand *intention* in language and apply it to rhythm as a way to explain an African influence present in the music of the *son jarocho*. I hope that I create an understanding of *rhythmic intention* as a way of leaning toward but not claiming a complete sound in reference to rhythm.
particularly the footwork of *zapateado Jarocho*, we reorient our minds in how we perceive both dance and music, and instead recount the many historical voices and dialogues that resonate in the striking of feet on wood.

There have been other scholars who have emphasized the importance of sound as an integral to identity. Ethnomusicologist Marisol Berrios-Miranda articulates in “Is Salsa a Musical Genre?” (2002) how sound is reflective of regional identities in the varying styles of Salsa. Berrios-Miranda states:

“In concentrating on the musical sound and the various ways they are reshaped and re-presented, relative to Cuban music one discovers a completely different world.”

She goes on to state, “To play and to dance to the music gives one an understanding of musical style that has not been well represented in scholarship.” In similar ways, I use *rhythmic intention* as a way to communicate the role that ancestral embodiment plays in the production of sound. *Rhythmic intention* assumes the body in practice holds privileged information. The body holds ancestry in relation to performance in the moment it is inspired to do so.

*Rhythmic intention* differs from “groove” and “feel” in its explanatory power. I have coined *rhythmic intention* to reference the diaspora embedded in rhythms from a socio-historical standpoint. Furthermore, through this phrase, I suggest that sound is also linked to lineage and ancestry from the point of view of resistance and survival. *Rhythmic intention* suggests that a sound, and the spirit of those who produce it, survives through the test of time. It resides in the cells of a body awaiting the promise of a new moment when memory can be retold, revived and re-linked to new experiences through present bodies and the promise of now.

Metaphorically speaking, *rhythmic intention* is like the relationship of bees to flowers. The flower lives and produces pollen as a source of survival and to continue the life of the flower species. The bee fulfilling its own needs of survival feeds on the flowers nectar taking with it the pollen that continues the memory of a flower soon to pass. It is thus the flower’s *intention* that the memories survive and connect across space but most

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509 Ibid.
importantly through time. I suggest that sound is music’s “pollen” with all the social, historical and political impetus that cultures shape to make their music. One can suggest that *groove* or *feel* could be synonymous, but I would disagree. *Rhythmic intention* is intended to affirm the history and political struggle in music’s echoes.

Along with an elaboration of *sung theories* and *rhythmic intention*, I hope to make public the many oral histories I collected from *artivistas* interviewed in the field. A separate book concerning their experiences as well as a family tree and genealogical mapping of “A People’s History of Chican@ Music” is also part of my future plans concerning community music scholarship.

**Moving Forward**

“I argue for activism as an indispensable component in learning. Action promotes consciousness of one’s own political practice....It is usually the greatest and most difficult learning experience, particularly if it is connected to communities and issues broader than the parameters of academic life.”

—Joy James

Chicana *artivista*, bailadora, musician, mother, daughter, sister, community member and student are all huddled and ready to inform my move into professorship. Negotiated by and through a differential consciousness, I hope that I have demonstrated how these identities have been shaped by many communities, activists, students, professors and scholars that, both on the ground and in the books, have inspired me to build on their work. Joy James articulates an important point above that relates to Chican@ *artivista* praxis in and outside of the classroom by stating, “activism is an indispensable component in learning.”

*Relationality* requires a complete self, present and engaged with others. Chican@ *artivista* praxis, methodology and epistemology are precisely contingent on *relationality* and learning as community through activism.

I believe that participatory music, dance and creative practices enact, allow and intrinsically instill love on many levels. Returning to Blacking who states:

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511 Ibid., 35.
“Problems in human societies begin when people learn less about love, because love is the basis of our existence as human beings. The hard task is to love, and music is a skill that prepares for this most difficult task.” 512

The goal, then, is to reach individual and collective humanity with an understanding that, “love is the basis of our existence as human beings.” As this dissertation has expressed time and again, my partner and I have witnessed this first hand. For this reason, embedded in the specificity of a Chican@ artivista experience, we continue to be committed to sharing these important practices as well as developing new ones, in dialogue with communities, wherever we may find ourselves.

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**Discography**


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