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Editor's Introduction

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Editor's Introduction

María Corral-Ribordy, Editor-in-Chief

Everything is contextual and this journal is no exception. The first volume of *CouRaGeouS Cuentos* appeared just six months ago, yet there is a profound difference in the socio-political context in the world since the inauguration of Donald Trump. Notwithstanding the record number of deportations that occurred during the Obama administration, Chicanx/Latinx communities tenaciously held on to the possibility that immigration reform in support of the legalization of people's immigrant status would be made into law. Young people still dreamed the Dream Act could pass.

Thousands of undocumented youth sought relief from the fear of deportation and applied for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). With the promise of a temporary protected status, many DACAdocumented youth enrolled in colleges and universities around the country. In California, these students can still pay in-state tuition at public universities as a result of Assembly Bill 540; however, they were still precluded from applying for federal financial aid to cover their educational expenses. Undocumented immigrants, many of whom are Latinx, held onto the hope, however tenuous, that a door of opportunity to legalize their status would open soon.

The unexpected election of Donald Trump, who opened his candidacy with criminalizing statements about "Mexicans," marks a crucial juncture in U.S. history. The current government is characterized by a Republican majority in Congress and the Oval Office staff ranges from ultra-conservative to "alt-right." The president already has appointed one Supreme Court Justice and likely will have the opportunity to nominate additional members of the Court.

Mexicans are not the only community that has been targeted as the undesired “other,” deemed dangerous to the national security of the United States. The civil and human rights of women, Muslims, Arabs, Chinese, immigrants, political refugees, and all People of Color are under attack.

The xenophobic vitriol of the president, his immediate Executive Orders on immigration, and the increased funding for the Department of Homeland Security have resulted in a climate of heightened fears – of apprehension, detention, deportation, and other forms of violence by the state and vigilante groups – in Chicana/Latina communities. Raids, detentions, and deportations are already fragmenting mixed-status families. DACAmented students are very concerned about their future status given official statements that DACA will be terminated. What’s more, the Department of Homeland Security will have a database with the personal information of thousands of young immigrants.

In these times of increased fear of escalating state violence, and the dominant discourse about who immigrants are in the imagination of mainstream America – Latinos, which is to say Mexicans, which is to say “illegals,” which is to say criminals, which is to say rapists – the counternarratives written by Chicana/Latina students are important, courageous, and urgently needed. This journal is intended to be a platform where such courageous cuentos can be published and made accessible to everyone who wants to read them.

This volume includes the CouRaGeouS cuentos written by students enrolled in *Ethnic Studies 107: Chicana/Latina Lives* and in *Ethnic Studies 480: Growing Up Chicana/Latino* at Humboldt State University in 2016. We have made no distinction between the students from each class because their writings are all, fundamentally, their counternarratives. The cuentos are organized alphabetically by the authors’ last names. As a result there are clusters of topics that occurred by happenstance, along with dynamic alignments and juxtapositions.

The writings reveal a mix of different languages, forms, and thematic content. The themes include emergent racial and ethnic identities, sexuality, gender identities, and self-perceptions as first-generation college students, scholars, and writers. The authors write of family and culture in complicated ways. Many write with gratitude and an awareness of the struggles their parents have overcome to provide the authors the opportunity to go to college and *salir adelante*. Other students write about the various ways their families reproduce gender oppression, homophobia, and white supremacist standards of beauty and worth.

Some authors have survived sexualized violence and others discuss mental health. In some cases alcoholism is linked with domestic violence. These testimonies are brave attempts to begin conversations to eliminate the cultural stigma and expose the myth that either “those things happen to other people” or “only I struggle with this issue.”

A clearly salient theme for the authors is the importance of their own education: how pride and self-doubt impact their success; how culture shock, sexism, and racism exacerbate their alienation at Humboldt State University; how the pressure to succeed and honor their parents can be a powerful source of motivation but can also be a paralyzing weight of responsibility. Many authors are grateful for their ancestors’ struggles and wish to forge a path for their younger siblings and *primx*.

The Collective Affirmation is a list composed from students’ assertions and affirmations about what they individually can do, think, know, and understand... This list was generated as a response to the dominant, and incorrect, perception that young people, women, People of Color, queer people and other marginalized peoples do not know, understand, do, nor can... Students submitted their lines voluntarily and the lines were sorted into different categories of assertions, mostly alphabetically. Different fonts have been used to highlight the individuality of each statement, however, there is no connection between fonts and authors. Though this poem’s voice is first person singular, as a whole, it is a collective statement.

Students voluntarily submit their cuentos for publication, and some students also included reflections about their writing process and their experiences in the class. These reflections have been included to reveal the pedagogical power of creating a space for students to write/speak about their own lived experiences and the impact such process has had on their sense of self as writers, one which validates them as authorities of their own lives, and truths. Some excerpts are printed on the first page and back cover in order to illustrate the potential power of this form of pedagogy to liberate the students, in the words of Demetria Martínez, to name their own reality and “become a subject, not an object, in history” (*Mother Tongue*, 39).

By having students reflect on their experience writing throughout the semester about their own lives on themes connected to the curriculum they were studying, we can imagine other possibilities for unleashing their creativity. Here, the authors write their own stories, on their own terms – uncensored, multi-lingual, and with unflinching candor – the authors raise their voices both as a form of community building and in defiance, their resistance to dominant stories about themselves.

Martínez writes of the power of telling our own stories as, “Not psychoanalysis, [they are] testimonio, story as prophecy, facts assembled to change not the self but the times” (*Mother Tongue*, 32). The editors of *CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives* welcome you to Volume 2 and invite you to listen to the students-then authors-now prophets, who by using their voices and telling their cuentos, have in fact the power to change the times.

María Corral-Ribordy
Editor-In-Chief

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