

CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives

Volume 5 *CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives*

Article 29

2022

Discussing my Community

Joahna Tool
Cal Poly Humboldt

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/courageouscuentos>



Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Chicana/o Studies Commons](#), [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), [Community-Based Learning Commons](#), [Creative Writing Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence Commons](#), [Educational Sociology Commons](#), [Ethnic Studies Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), [History Commons](#), [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#), [Latin American Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Latina/o Studies Commons](#), [Modern Literature Commons](#), [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), [Reading and Language Commons](#), and the [Theory, Knowledge and Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tool, Joahna (2022) "Discussing my Community," *CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives*: Vol. 5, Article 29.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/courageouscuentos/vol5/iss1/29>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License](#)

© 2016 Department of Critical Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies (CRGS) at Humboldt State University.

This Counternarratives and Reflections is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons @ Cal Poly Humboldt. It has been accepted for inclusion in *CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives* by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Cal Poly Humboldt. For more information, please contact kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu.

Discussing my Community

By Joahnna Tool

I grew up in a small city called Yucaipa which is in San Bernardino County in Southern California. My family and I moved to this city when I was around four years old and I have lived there ever since, however, it is hard to describe this place as my community. Yucaipa is predominately white and super conservative, so it has always felt weird being a person of color living there. I am actually not too sure how my city documents our history because up until recently, I didn't even know much about the origins of it. It was not until I had an assignment for my NAS class that I learned that this city was originally an outpost for the San Gabriel Mission, and it was originally home to the Serrano people. I found this to be shocking because there is only one small adobe museum in town and I feel like a lot of people did not even know about it, including myself. I hope that moving forward, more people can become aware of the injustices that marginalized communities face in this city and take action to combat the systems of oppression.

Honestly what I remember most about living in Yucaipa is going to school because I felt as if that was where my life was centered around. From elementary school to middle school, it was really hard for me to make friends and I believe that this is because I was surrounded by so many white people. It wasn't until high school that I made a good group of friends who happened to be other people of color. Being in this friend group, it was the closest thing I had to a community because we could all relate to each other on a deeper, more personal level. I remember that my friends and I joined the Latino Cultural Club around my sophomore year of high school, and here we were able to learn more about each other, our cultures, and practices that shaped us. Some of these practices included celebrating Día de los Muertos, Christmas on the 24th, Día de los Reyes, and of course, all of the delicious food. Being a part of this club really meant a lot to me because it was the first time I felt like I could embrace my

identity as a woman of color. In my senior year of high school, I was elected the vice president of this club, so it was a really cool experience being able to share the knowledge I had learned with others. Other than school, another community I grew up in was within the church I attended. My parents raised my older brother and I to be Catholic, and this included going to church every Sunday and even some extra times throughout the week for special events. I know that for my family, this was and continues to be their community, but for me, it feels as if this stopped being my community quite a long time ago. It was around the beginning of my sophomore year of high school that I began to feel myself distancing from the church because I just could not wrap my head around the ideas that I was supposed to hold. From then on, I began to learn about social justice topics and felt like I could no longer call myself Catholic.

The main reason why it is so hard for me to identify with the communities by which I was raised in is because I am a queer Latina woman. I do not think I will ever be able to feel comfortable within these spaces I once called my communities because it is hard to identify with anyone and feel truly accepted for who I am and that takes away the whole feeling of being a part of a community. In the reading, "Finding Sequins in the Rubble," by Eddie Alvarez, it was discussed how sequins represent a form of resistance for queer people, specifically trans Latinas whose history and identity tend to be ignored. One part of this reading that I strongly related to was when it discussed how sometimes conforming is an important part of the trans experience because simply being able to survive is a victory in itself. I was very used to keeping to myself and not standing up for myself, especially when it came to the various microaggressions that I would face, while living in my city. Although it is very different from the experience of being a trans woman, I can still relate to the experience of being a queer woman who has to hide a part of herself anytime I am around my family or other unwelcoming people. The idea that "...Memories *are* sequins in the rubble" was very moving to me because I believe that we can all take our life experiences and reflect on them to discover more about ourselves, and that is what I hope to do in my everyday life.

Racism, classism, and backlash are some of the challenges that the people of color in my city have to experience. I myself have experienced these while growing up there, but most of the time I did not know it was even happening until I started to look back at my childhood from my older age. I feel as if a lot of people in my city have recognized these oppressions and have just overlooked them. I hate that we have become complacent with just living in silence, but I know that it is also really difficult to change the minds of a whole population. However, even when we do try to stand up for ourselves, we are faced with even more hatred. During the summer of 2020, some people organized many Black Lives Matter protests in my city and they were just faced with white supremacists with guns threatening them. It was honestly scary having all of this happening just down the street from me. I felt very helpless during these times because I wanted to protest and stand up for what I believe in, but at the same time, I was scared for my own safety. I am glad to now be living in a safe place where my identity is supported, and my voice is heard.

Works Cited:

Alvarez Jr., E. F. (2016). Finding Sequins in the Rubble: Stitching Together an Archive of Trans Latina Los Angeles. *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 3 (3-4), 618-627.