

# CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives

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Volume 8

Article 22

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2024

## Creando Comunidad

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### Recommended Citation

Angon, Amy (2024) "Creando Comunidad," *CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives*: Vol. 8, Article 22.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/courageouscuentos/vol8/iss1/22>



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## Creando Comunidad

My name is Amy Angon. I am a Chicana, a Mexicana, and I've spent my whole life in Humboldt. It's a quiet, nice place with a lot of nature, and while there aren't many things to do, it makes it easier to get closer to people. Even though it's not super diverse, everyone generally gets along. In my class, all the Mexican kids come together. We're all around the same age, and while there aren't many of us, we stick together. There are more Mexican kids in Fortuna, and I often talk to people from Eureka and Fortuna High. Ferndale and Loleta's park, market, and river are places I cherish, but I always wish there were more Latinos in general. Sometimes, it's hard for others to relate to my experiences, and some things just don't translate. It's easier to talk to someone from my ethnicity who understands me. I spend a lot of time playing games, eating, and talking with Mrs. Auza. I wish there were more events in the community to bring us together. I enjoy playing with my dogs – Biscuit, Cookie, and Princess the puppy. They are my spirit animals. I connect deeply with them. In 2008, there was a raid at Sun Valley, where my parents worked. They both lost their jobs, and we struggled. My dad has always worked in agriculture and ranchos, which made it hard for him to find different careers after that. My mom had to find a job at a hotel because of them losing their job and needing to provide for us. She still works at that hotel to this day. They don't really talk about it much, but it was a tough time. I want to build a stronger community and strengthen la raza.

Living in Loleta, I've had my share of problems with neighbors. Having more safe spaces where we can be ourselves without being judged is important, especially in Humboldt. I imagine spaces where we can talk, eat chilaquiles, practice spanglish, and share chisme on long walks. I prefer the rivers, where we can banter, laugh, and make fun of each other without criticism. Racism is more prevalent in McKinleyville, and you can tell when someone is being fake-friendly – cuando están chingando. Not knowing the white culture in Humboldt

can make school life tough. It can make you insecure, and you might even start to hate your own culture. There are always gente “mamona” who criticize everything – from our chancas to our flower shirts and the way we wear our clothes. They think it’s cheap. My mom always told me not to fight, but it’s hard when you’re constantly judged. Living in Humboldt as a Chicana, I’ve faced many challenges, but I’m determined to help create a community where we can thrive together. I hope for a future where our culture is celebrated, not criticized, and where we can be ourselves without fear of judgment.

I have experienced racism in Humboldt. There was a time my mom was picking up clothing to send to her siblings, and there was this white woman who was in her 50s. My mom and I had a misunderstanding. We were talking about it and this woman went past us and said “Shhh.” We weren’t loud and we were in public but no one was around. I felt disrespected, it was a private conversation that no one should care about. Another experience that I remember is when I used to live here in Arcata. There’s not a lot of places where you could go to buy lunch, so I would go with my mom to McKinleyville to the other Safeway when she got out of work. There was this group of people standing in the aisle and my mom and I were passing by, and I said excuse me to pass by and they gave us the dirtiest and nastiest look ever, as if we were rats or cockroaches just passing by. I obviously felt bad, like these people are racist. Like is it our color, our race? Is it that bad to you? Like we might not be the richest, but we honestly have the biggest heart. It’s like people think that us Mexicans or any race in general, are less than like white people just because we have actual sazón and they don’t. They want to be us, they want to be tan, they want quinceañeras, and they want braids from other races.

Obviously, I don’t think it’s a bad thing, but people think we’re the bad people for coming. Like, yes our parents immigrated to this country but our parents pay taxes here and they don’t have the right to vote nor the right to come and go back to their country, and yet they are still criticized. We pay for the government and we do everything that they do. It’s horrible how

they treat us just because we're not güeritos, with pelo claro y con ojitos azules. We're not less. I'm sorry but I'm going to say this, we're better. Obviously we have our white friends because they're not all bad; some are amazing and the nicest people ever. But there's still some old people who are stuck in the old days, and it's offensive to the newer generations. Our parents work hard to pay for this government, the white government, because it's not theirs. If they had the option, they would have stayed in Mexico. If there were better opportunities, if it was no't so dangerous, they would have stayed, but there's a choice in life you have to make. It's hard, when I think about that, it's just hard.

My parents came to the United States differently. I remember my mom said that they asked her and her uncle if she wanted to come to the United States and she said yes. I think it was kind of the same for my dad, but my mom got tired cause she had to walk through the desert, and for my dad he got someone to pick him up and then he passed. Obviously I feel bad for my mom cause she would say "If it wasn't for my brother I wouldn't be safe. Sometimes when the coyotes were passing us, they raped the girls." Thinking about that, trying to come to the United States and getting abused, it's really sad because of the necessity to come here. It's so amazing how immigrant parents do it. Like our generation is lazy, I'm saying this because I am too but, like our parents feet hurt but they still clean their house, wash their clothes, and cook for their family. We all care about each other. That's why we all get along. When you're running for the ice cream man, those are the best memories that rich people can't have. I would like to have more comunidad anywhere. To have all of us together sharing street food, all the good things, playing games, like honestly it would be a good experience. It creates memories, it shares cultures with everyone. My dream is to eventually become a veterinarian or tattoo artist.



*Art by Amy Angon*