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Colocha: a Memoir

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Colocha: A memoir

by

Julieta Castro

An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts

in

University Honors

and

Women's Studies

Thesis Adviser

Advisor Dr. Eddy Francisco Alvarez Jr.

Portland State University

2019

Colocha.



Julieta Castro
A Memoir.

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Hola. Welcome to mi libro. I want to thank everyone who helped put this book together, and all the wonderful voices, spirits, and teachers in my life who have taught me and showed me how to speak, how to use my voice in different languages, and how to say the things my tongue and heart would like. I want to thank the trees for using their paper, I want to thank the mothers and daughters who have shown me strength, and I want to thank the birds for chirping, even though we have destroyed their homes and their trees. I want to thank the bees, for pollinating the flowers we do not kill, and for showing us how to care for the plants and the cycle we are all a part of. I want to thank the squires who manage to develop ecosystems and neighborhoods despite our forceful move in. The land I am standing on right now is only because of the genocide of the original people of the Americas. I want to thank all the oranges and blueberries that gave me the energy to be here. I want to thank all the hands, and all the labor that went into harvesting those berries and oranges, and all the cleaners and cooks who have cleaned the toilet bowl for me, have fed me, and made their labor available while I use public facilities. I thank my laptop and the dollars that paid for it from my tias in San Francisco.

I want to thank my grandma and her hard hands, for sending centavitos and little earrings all my life. I want to acknowledge and thank my Family, near and wide, for bringing me into this life with

kisses and love. I want to thank my step father, for paying for my water, my rent, my food, my car, my car insurance, and supporting me in the attainment of my Bachelors. I want to thank my mother, for bleeding me into this world and loving me so so ferociously. I want to thank my sister, for all the phone calls of doubt, and the hang ups of joy and self confidence. I want to thank my hermanito, for always being patient and kind with me. I want to thank my hermanita for showing her heart around even in darkness, showing me how to love fearlessly, and playfully. I want to thank my friends for allowing me to grow, and grow on to them, and with them. I want to thank my professors and teachers, who heard her little voice before she knew how to use it. I want to thank all those mentors in my life, advisors, staff, coordinators, for gifting me with resources such as a full paid tuition or position, for trusting in me, and letting me present myself with my own imagination and creativity. A special thank you to my Thesis Advisor Dr. Eddy Francisco Alvarez Jr., for giving me the wings to fly, and all the encouragement in the world to live out loud. I want to thank the sun, for waking me and the rest of the world up, and for feeding all the beings that will soon feed me. I want to thank Luna, for being a pearl glass mirror, there to catch my tears and offer the stability that I always want. I want to thank all the rocks, and all the sand, for witnessing it all, and the violent side of humanity, and still being the ground we can stand on. I want to thank the dirt for being oh so humble with us, and giving yourself till the day we cannot take any more from your grain, your ground, your beauty. I want to thank all the writers, and creators, and artists before me for being oh so brave and leading with a vision that only your imagination and resilience could birth. I want to thank every writer and fighter before me, those known or unknown, alive, or in another presence, in whatever age or place you come from. I want to thank my body, for all the countless nights of no sleep, of pushed away sleep, of I don't "deserve" sleep. I want to thank my bones for holding me up even when I didn't have calcium, I want to thank my hands for being so complacent in typing, designing, feeding. I want to thank my feet, for walking with me even when I do not want to get up or move. I want to thank my eyes for giving me the gift of color every single day. I want to thank my hair, for being so unapologetic to conformity and white supremacy, you teach me lessons every day. I want to thank all the blood in my veins, and my heart that has travelled across generations and generations, and landscapes of la Tierra. I want to thank my ancestors, for helping me win track and field races, get angry, and be able to receive and listen to love. I thank everyone and everything for being in the universe all at once for I am you, and you are me. Thank you for reading.



Introduction

The name of this book translates to curly haired in the Salvadoran Spanish. The barbed wire on the cover of this book twists not to guard a prison, but *our backyard back home*. There is a heavy saturation of violence and poverty. The curls of my hair, and the curls of the metal, we share a lot.

Both historically and currently, societies across the globe are inequitably structured and stratified based on gender, race, sex, ethnicity, nationality, ability, and many other social or physical markers of 'difference'. And yet, despite the enduring presence of unbalanced power dynamics in human culture, there have always been voices resisting that control. From early cultures to modern cultures, storytelling continues to be a site for self awareness, critical analysis, self understanding, self preservation, and even healing. A topic of great interest to me, is exploring how one's voice (in written and artistic formats) can serve as a language and site which resists, critiques, redefines, and even redistributes relations and structures of power, those of which shape interactions of domination and subordination.

Writing and creating this piece has been years in the making. I must have been 14 years old when I first started needing the page to say things. Journal and journals piled up, with very few eyes on

them but mine. Now 21, and years later, I have created a space for my thoughts to live. Pages and pages blank, ready for those who are brave enough to make an imprint. I write this because I want to represent my reality. Because there are not enough Salvadorens in higher education, or who are friends with the pen and enemies to the State. Being erased is part of my history. I will not. I refuse. I write to pass these stories down, so that they may live longer than I do. I come from jocotes and rain, I come from annihilation, colonization, migration, and dirt. Long forgotten in an Urban place like Portland, I carry with me always and forever a hemispheric consciousness. I live in two worlds, at once, and I live, suffer, cry, laugh, and dance wherever I am. I want to take responsibility for my society. Not many can go to college, or spend \$24,000 a year on a Bachelor's degree. With everything I've learned here, I knew I had to share with others. In writing this, hopefully I can promote inclusivity and understanding across gender, class, ethnic, and generational divides.

Perdón, I am sorry. For some words will be in English, or Spanish, or both. I am sorry to those who cannot read another tongue, but I recognize that language shapes you, and so that is why I cannot write only in Spanish or only in English. I am of two worlds, and so is this book. This is only my attempt to reveal all the colors in the world. The photography is all mine, and the images are all taken in moments where my heart told my eyes that I have to preserve this. In this multimedia memoir I need to talk about ideas in different ways, in all the ways. Words alone are not enough sometimes. I'm done being jeopardized by words, they are not my only storyteller here. And yet, these words will have to be birthed whether they should be born or not.

Please read this in whatever order or way feels authentic to you, there is no order, there is no linear pressure in my pages. Only love, warmth, and fire.



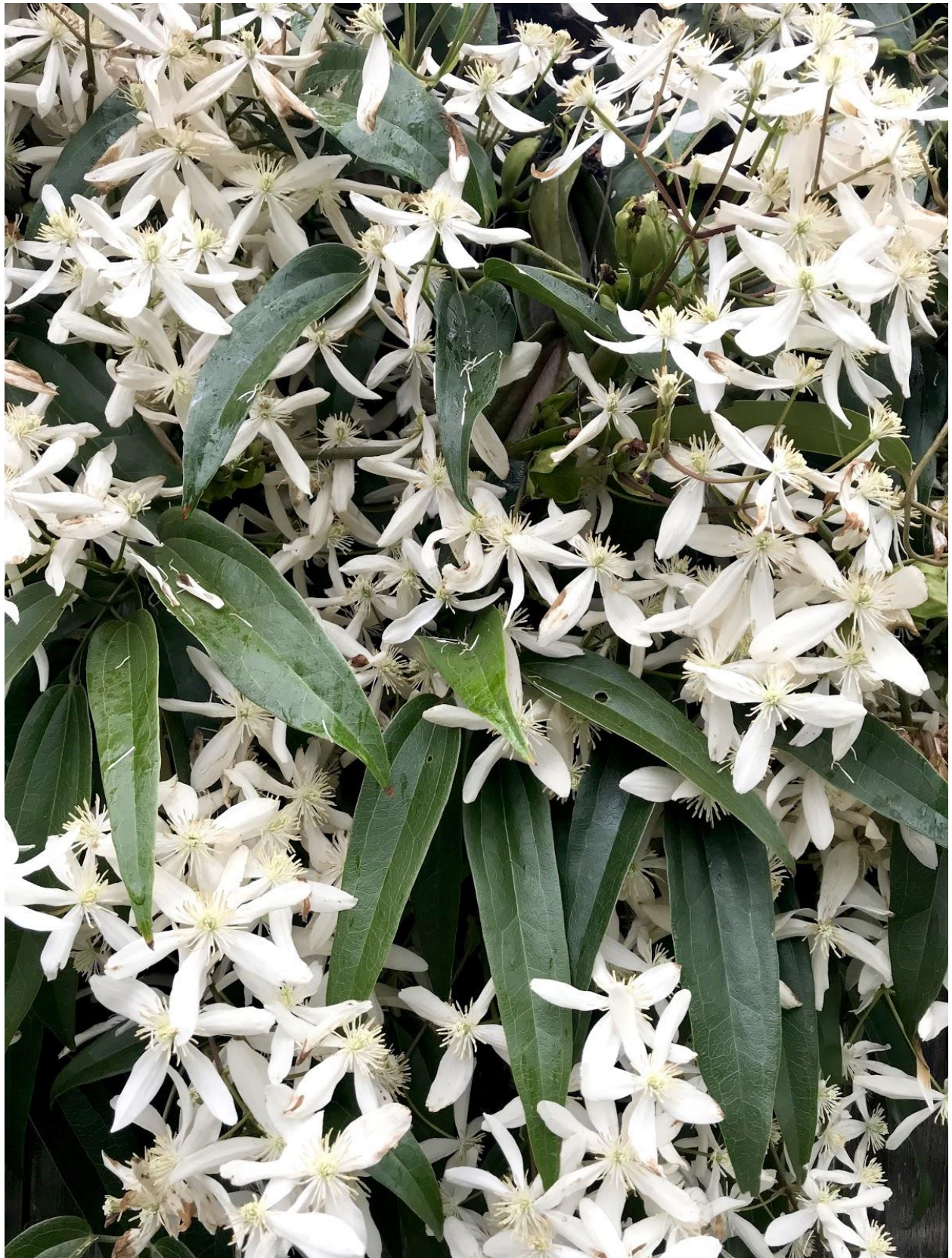
Dolce and Gabbana

Daughter at Gunpoint

When asked why she migrated, she responded “because of the violence. We ran a restaurant in our garage and someone broke in and held my three year old daughter at gunpoint. We had visas so we left.”

We left.

We are here now.



Red, Turquoise, Yellow

I was five. I arrived.

I went to school little. My
timid Spanish not good
enough in a town of English.

I read the crayon names.
The colors I could
understand
Red,
Turquoise,
Yellow, not hieló.

Swinging on the swings

Mammi would walk me to
school. Stairs , up and down
and up and down
Crows waking us up in the
grey Orange County morning

Blue skies would walk me
home.

New kid new kid new kid.
Thanksgiving hands for
turkeys and stolen lip gloss
from girls who were bullies.

Read.

Read.

Read.

Get better.

Read

Read

Read

Read so you survive.
Don't stop reading or
learning how to speak their
language

We have to fit in
We have to assimilate

Red,
Turquoise,
Yellow, not hieló.

No we're not hurting
Spanish, we still use it,
just behind closed doors.

We say tortilla, frijoles,
limonada, queso, crema, and
azul, rojo, amarillo.

We learned English and ran
with it not understanding the
cost

Just the pay.

We didn't look back, we kept
going going going. That
should have been the first
sign of war and us as
refugees. Or the second.

I didn't know that then.

Learn the language and be
strong.
That's what we did here to
belong

We weren't supposed to
wake up and up and up
And realize what we were
running from was chasing us

We ran into the same.
People being hungry, people
being angry, people being
rich, people who want to be
the only boss. Humans taking
taking taking

Rojo,
Azul,
Amarillo.

The crayons never said that. I
wanted to color, so I learned

Red,
Turquoise,
Yellow.



Tu Nombre

Raquel

Don't let them call you Rachel

Don't let them.

It doesn't seem so bad at first,

But that's how it starts.

They take and take from you

And then they take the rest of who you are.

Raquelita,

Primita,

Don't let them call you Rachel

That's how it starts

Tu nombre es tuyo, cuando te cambias para otras lenguas,

También cambias otras cosas

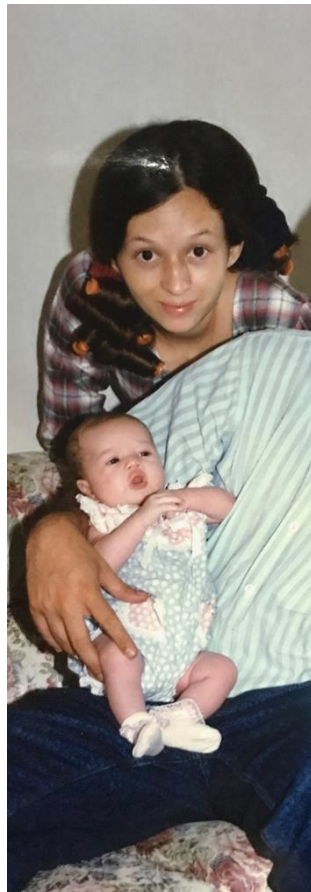
Ahí es donde empieza.

Te llamas Raquel y yo Julieta.



Two Halves

I watched Papa grow smaller from the rear view car window, not understanding that would be the last time I ever saw him. He promised he would call. But what I don't know is if he promised he loved us. He left. I don't know if he promised that ever. Valero gas station and the town of Seaside. We were always moving, our feet, our hands, our places to sleep and cook and call home. Mama Tere, she took us in. She moved to the living room so two families could sleep in one room, bunk beds on every corner. We are here now. Look forward not back. He is gone, but father's day doesn't bother me, I have a mom and she is both. There is no such thing as two halves, that is what I learned from them.



what happens when you have to kill a good word for a bad man?

I know why i'm so much like my mother. Cuz I didn't have another half to be like. My other half drank, did drugs, and got into car accidents that left a nine year old girl paralyzed.

That's why I'm so much like my mother. Because that's all she wanted me to see, and I saw only what she wanted. There is no ugly truth if you don't show it.

In a way, well in many ways, this is a good decision because not only did I turn out like her, but I certainly didn't turn out like him.
But in order to be full you have to be half.

And then I realized. That I had another half to me. I displaced him from my body as if he's not in my bones and inside the cave of my ribs. As if my ears were not his, as if my eyes were not his. As if my skin, was not his. As if my face, was not his. You are inside me. Yet you wash away every single day like a faint stain. Forgotten in the sunlight and the moonlight.

You left. You left me. You left me. You left me. You left me. You left me. You left me. You left me. You left me. You left me. You left me. You left me. You left me. You left me. You left me.

Another half I didn't even know I needed until I realized that maybe he could fill all the holes in my life that we couldn't.

But what did that do to me now? What did that do to me now. What did that do to me now. What did that do to me now. What did that do to me now. What did that do to me now.

What happens when you have to kill a good word for a bad man?
I have eliminated him from my vocabulary, but alongside Father, I also erased the words Trust. Real. There for you. Male support. Companionship. Teamwork. Two. Duo. Stay. I love you.



Give Them Back

Why am I mad at my parents

When it's the system

They're like this because of the
system

She grew up in war. They had
guns;

They made sure you stayed
quiet,

He grew up with drugs.

Drinking was his freedom turned chains

Mammi needed
papers

And Dad needed a wife and
family

I am afraid of the
system

It takes away your family

And sometimes it doesn't give them back.



Mother's Hands

I look at my hands and see my Mother's
They are mother's hands
Hands that look like hers
But they're not.

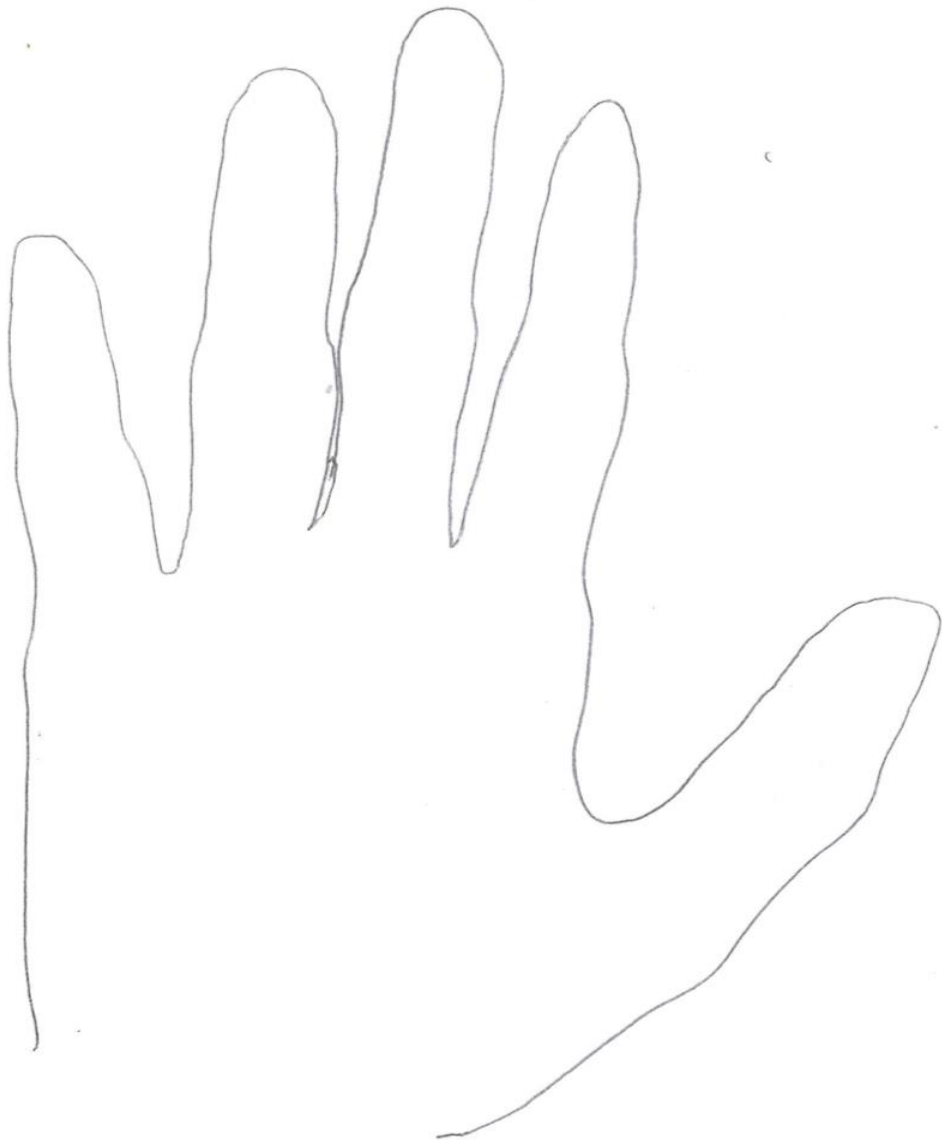
I will always have a part of mother in me
My hands look like hers
She's not going anywhere
She will always be a part of me
The hard worker
The very hard work
The very hard work

My hands are her hands and I see her hands in my own
Mom I can never forget you,
You are the front of my hands
I see you always
I hate it
But, I feel it.

What language do you speak?
What language did you have to learn for me?
Why did you have to learn this language for us
You speak it better than your own Mama.
You came here to this mean place for us Mammi.

And I grieve for you every day you are alive, because to me every day you live is one day closer
to your part.

Your hands are in mine forever.



Mother to Myself

In my friend's shoe box of a dorm, I hunt for homes. It was a 10 x 10 apartment I looked up. That's what the Craigslist Ad said, and I needed to know if \$575 plus utilities was a good deal for the dimensions. What could I fit —what was I going to have to leave behind?

Earlier that day, I visited the gender neutral restroom of the third floor of the university library where I've seen a menstrual supply box in there before. Desperately hoping to find some pads or tampons, there were no menstrual products left. No había nada ahí. My period surprised me and I had no ways to receive it, this heart red blood, a beautiful color, más rojo que la sangre y el amor. At least I am not pregnant. The man I shared my body with lives far away, in some lavish place with more square feet than I. Wearing a really old pad from 10 PM the night before, it's now 1 AM and I'm hoping the beautiful color pouring from in my lower body slows until morning. My body, beautiful and resilient, unconditionally depends on me as her mother and support. I ale her as best I can, despite being houseless and looking for a safer place to call home. I calm her, silently promising her for 100 square feet of freedom.

The white cotton pad, a red foam, holds the parts of me I can no longer carry. Menstrual products are not free. They cost. It's a tax I have to pay just like the disproportionate emotionally taxing labor that comes with the gendered perception and community role of Woman. I'm just hoping this gift doesn't harm anybody's bedsheets, it's not my bed sheet and I would feel terrible staining it. I would feel terrible sharing something that somebody else does not want. This sign of life, and a sign of death, its circular flow, assured me I was not going to be a mother for anybody else that night.

Just a mother to myself.



Julieta

I need to take care of this baby
the baby haired Julieta
She needs me
She needs to find some happiness
She needs it really bad
She wants to run away far away
See what it feels like to inhale the dark blue earth all by herself
She wants to run away and be a force
a koi



Ants

Falling from a very high flower to the
cracks in the ground, like bugs we lived,
tight

Lacking in bright

In this dark spot there was always light.
Here I learned if grim work, of hard work,
of love, of family and life

Sharing everything from foods to beds to
hopes and meds

As the seasons pass
The leaves in autumn, no flowers blossom
I cannot forget that I fell from here once
and learned about rudimentary life, about
nature and nurture, true smiles, hard
workers

So delicate and fragile, yet raw, messy and
wild
So often we are hiding, afraid of exposing,
sharing, and trusting.



My Bedroom Window

I saw the birds outside,
I was the one in the cage.

Time

Do I trust time right now? Do I let it hold me? Do I let the minute wrap itself around me? And hold me? Do I trust the time? So fast. As fast as the Max train zooming underground. What holds me always, but not forever. Time, it carries us.

All of us. No matter what language or gender or color or age or geography. No matter what, time holds us all. How fast was I going? I didn't notice. How fast was I going?

Not slow. Don't slow. Slow down. How can I? Teach me. How to not worry. I learned how to worry right? I learned it from somewhere and have never stopped using it. Teach me. How to slow. How to stop. How to dance with time. Time is my friend. It runs even if I don't. Even after I die, Time still goes. Time. Never stops It controls us all. The ground a man made clock. They're wearing fake masks again! They're FAKEEESMILING

Our minds on double speed. Our hearts get no time to bleed. But then we leak it. The blood comes out through the small cracks in our smiles. Through our eyes in the form of clear blood. The heart is not beating. It's bleeding. Can you slow down time, since you don't know how to slow yourself? I can't keep up. The heart will always pump fast

For if it pumps slow, or doesn't pump at all...We are hearts. Pumping ourselves to stay alive.

Working until the day we fall to the ground like the fall of a heart rate. We beat until we can beat no more. There have been no breaks in my life. What starts the very first heartbeat? That never stops for a hundred years. What magic. Our hearts the power buttons to our bodies. Tick.

Tock.



Limonada

I will work hard so hard, expecting that the capitalist system will reward me
because if I have worked my hands to death to live
then one day I will get to be
on a porch
drinking limonada
a fortress or an entrance, a garden
with the red flowers
and the yellow ones
and the violet ones
and the white ones
and the pink ones
how bold their colors
I,
wearing my lover's oversize shirt,
on the porch
reading away in the cool summer heat
on the maca.
and then at seven pm,
the enamoring show,
heavy dark blue silence sinks the sunset
but for now
I see the pain of my existence, and the existence of others
the flowers and me quietly exchanging looks of secret hope.



board game of domination

You might wake up if your eyes open to the board game of domination
And if you wake up you will want to make it stop

And when you see everything go,
That you see needs to stop,

You will follow your heart,
And try to make it stop

But the empire keeps getting bigger and bigger
Until it is a big big monopoly

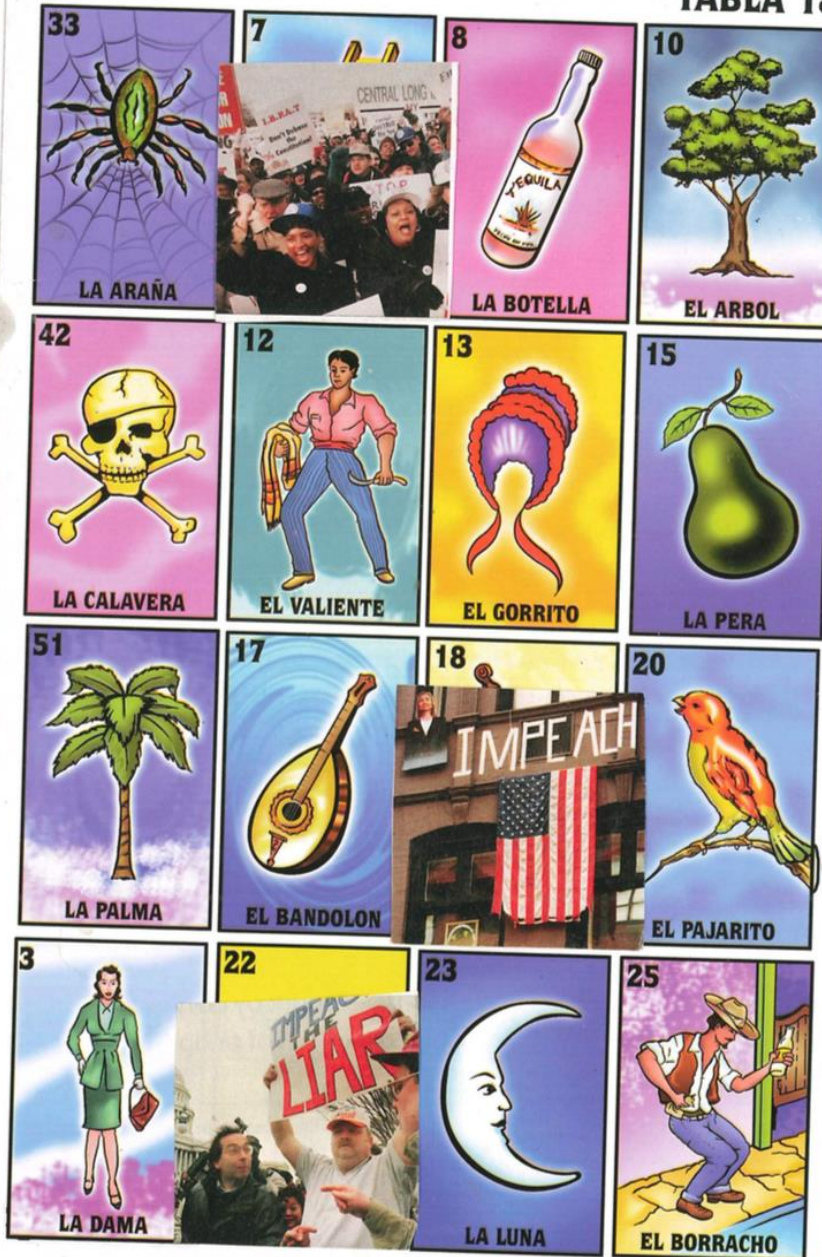
The game never ends
Only new pieces join

You will get to play the game
And your turn will soon be up.

Love never wins
Fear always does

And that is how you lose.

TABLA 18



Iphones for Eyes

The look away
When you look
And then you look *away*.

Blind people
Black people
Brown people
Trans people
Houseless people

Looking away is cold
It's dangerous
And It's Portland.

Look away
Distract your guilt
Or your privilege
Look away
Your eyes don't like discomfort or survival
Your eyes like money and your own kind.

But your eyes like safety most of all
And you have built the most unsafe world of all.

Sylvia Rivera

They want her dead.
They want her quiet.
They want her gone.
All her sisters too.
All of her sisters.



they want to kill my friends
they want to kill my family
they want to kill us one by one,
or in groups
the murder has never stopped.

they want us dead
they want us gone
they want everyone who isn't
them to wash away after they
are done erasing and taking us

¿Eres una persona LGBTI desplazada?

- 1 Eres una persona LGBTI**
 Lesbiana, Gay, Bisexual, Transgénero, Transexual o Interssexual
- 2 Has sido obligado u obligada a huir de tu hogar o comunidad**
- 3 Por situaciones de violencia, grupos delincuenciales o grupos armados.**

CONTACTOS

COMCAVIS TRANS EL SALVADOR
 comcavistrans@gmail.com

2508 - 6880
 2564 - 5029

Si eres una persona LGBTI desplazada interna o deportada con necesidades de protección

COMCAVIS TRANS

te brinda asistencia y apoyo en

- Asesoria Legal y Defensa Judicial**
- Aguda Humanitaria**
- Apoyo en trámite de documentación**
- Servicio Social para apoyar a víctimas**

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Personas LGBTI Desplazadas Internas

¿quiénes son?

Son las personas LGBTI que son forzadas u obligadas a abandonar sus hogares o lugares de residencia habitual para evitar los efectos del conflicto armado, situaciones de violencia generalizada, violaciones de derechos humanos y que no han cruzado fronteras reconocidas internacionalmente.

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Equal Geography

Men outside
Women in the home
All alone
Quieter
than a hung up phone
Geography
Of equality
gender roles
Hero and hoe...
That ain't true
Shits' wilder than a zoo
Girlhood on her shirt
Motherhood soon
She develops with the help of men
She learned to pretend
BITCH an actress
A goddess
Practice being modest
But be hottest
Be the baddest
Im the maddest
To be honest
I've seen so many get locked up
Get fucked up
Get turned into lap dogs
Sweeter than Kellogg's
Is a lady is only edible?
Man this incredible
You Look in the mirror
To assure yourself you ain't invisible
That you visible
That you person
Instead of purse
Or worse
Born right into a herse

Fuck this verse
Like he fuck you
Hard, quick, him, you that's two
This math mad
This world sad
Girlhood on her shirt
Motherhood soon
Too soon
All blue
No clue
To tell you the truth
I don't speak for everybody
Just me
Woman studies every day
To try to change the game
The word female
A reminder
of male
Ladies let's prevail
End the tale
In strength and scale
This raps done
But not me
Or your son
Teach him how to act
In a way that ain't sad
Cuz your daughter
Growing up too
Growing up learning the world is his
Hers is so far away it's infinity
But nothing is a defiantly
Cuz this world filled with possibility
Gender roles in the farm
in the city
Very much binary

But where is a home with an equal
geography?

Princess to Queen is No Easy Thing

A Rap

I sit here
Living in fear
Think I need to disappear
Sheer lips
Small hips
No dicks
Trip on my shit
I'm on another mindset
Don't mind it
Don't mind me
Get off me
Clear way for a queen
Ur motherfucking dream.
Don't need no king
Not sitting you
sitting on the throne Where I was born
Talking is a chore
But don't call me a whore
Ride away in yo horse
I stand tall of course
This is my kingdom
You are my victim
Trapped in my prison
My eyes, they glisten
That's how u to listen
I make the decisions
I said no kissin
You needa call me yo princess
Fuck that not no mistress
Miss this
Miss me
Queen B
A Bad She
A bitch with a crown
Gold, old with knowledge
So woke I hold u hostage
Enslave your actions
Free your emotions
Love your ruler

Yours truly
Your only
You lonely
I'm lovely
My landscape is pretty
North is south with me
Forget your compass
get lost in my energy
Building walls so tall
So bold
Marble and stone
Build myself a castle
Trap me like Lil Yaughty
Yes I'm naughty
Not no shawty
Up in here
A million years
This fairytale stale
A story in a book
Pages
Pink laces
Perfume traces
A Feminine Basis
Seen beautiful faces
But Not like mine
Ma big eyes
Brown sweets
Visions in sleep
Seen too much
Cried too much
My hair
Tangled
Not quite Rapunzel
My arms
Ballet carves
Put in work
Who ever said
Love don't hurt
Love don't hurt
Won't hurt

My body religious like the church
White I wear
I don't care
But I dare
You to speak Your mind
With me
Let's be free
No lies
Don't make me cry
Treat me so high
That you have to fly
Elevated
Enchanted
Held in a spell
Fuck we're going to hell
Angel
All pure
No bull
Just me
And you
I require special attention
Not part of some male domination
Let's call out all tension
Put our hearts out on suspension
True loves kiss
Fuck all of it
I am in command
Bitch this is my land
I invite you
Look with my eyes
Seeing the world from a pink lens
From tears of fragile and tired
of all I've acquired
I've learned compassion
Choosing passion
Over fear
No mo timidness this year
Can't wear a dress
Without feeling like I'm yours
Princess to queen
Is no easy thing
Raised by a mother so powerful
My ending will be too
I'm not doubtful
Locked room

Not going to wait for you
This gold key
always been near me
I am my hero
Prince Charming created to cope with loneliness
But the price, was loneliness.
Not much is changed from last time I spoke
Only that I'm louder
More woke
I'm awake
To the games
To buying
And selling
And investing
Shits so risky like the stock market
Don't trade me
Like don't try to upgrade me
I made an effort
You cared less and
So I left it
But not before
Trusting your words
So charming
Prince Charming
A conquest just for my body
Tired of all these boys
When I walk like a woman
Confident rising and moving
A castle built to house love
On broken foundations
Art creations
To forget the relation
When I lack explanation
You see me writing
Fighting
Repairing
And you not caring
A woman was born
Aware of her power
Midnight This is the hour The clock strikes
twelve
Close this book,
And put it back on the shelf.
Love Yourself



Across the Ross Island Bridge I Loved You.

Across the Ross Island bridge I had a world so far away

A place for my identity
A place for me to love you

Across the Ross Island Bridge

I'll begin to cry
And then I'll say

He doesn't care about you
He didn't care about you

He disrespected you
He didn't want you
And then my tears dry

I still haven't washed my covers
Your body laid there
Beside mine

And I was assured that's all that mattered.

I still haven't change my covers

Your sweat and your smell
Fade slowly

But the smell of cigarettes in public

A secret between me and the scent
And the world won't know about us
Our love is gone.
And that's a very sad thing.



FILL ME

I'm empty. Fill me.
Fill me with your voice
With your smile
Fill me with your stare
Fill me with your presence
Fill me with you

But don't leave me empty
Don't empty all the happiness
Don't empty the youth
Don't empty the hope
You can't like me. Because I'll like you more.
I'll need you and you won't.

I'm pouring myself to missing cups

Empty but with lies
Empty but with shy hope
Empty but with false words
Empty but full



A fish tattoo.

I gently whisper to myself the secret
of the fish painted permanently on your arm.

The skin that once touched mine

But Fish swim,
And Birds fly away.

With a will to move forward
in the same linear violence
of time

Fate

Our paths did cross
But maybe the significance was in walking away

I'll remember that we came together
In my memory forever

and the sun through the window
got a glimpse of our secrets

But you're sweeter in memory
That's how it had to be.



Pretty Girl

She grew up fucked up, but she was pretty.
She learned how to always be pretty.



Fuck Phil Knight's plane

A las luz we turned right
We talked about our spirits

Oh sweet bullet
We took a shot of his uncle's moonshine

There's no point in walls, he says

I want to live an authentic life,

That's what my healing looks like, he said.

Hook Up

I did separate my emotion from my body during hook up sex yah

And it was terrible

Let's try this again

And again.



Waiting for Notifications

You're not going to help me

But I miss you

I miss you

Waiting for notifications



The Break Up

we finally broke
and all i'll have is my words
not your face
or your smell
or your jokes
or your hair
not your coffee
nor your smokes
nor your body
nor your clothes

all i'll have is my words
i saw you stop trying
 i got scared
you let me go
i let you go
we let us go.



Never Alone

Deep somewhere in me you are
The lover to my breath;
Air

Kissing you without ever a thanks

I am not lonely

Without you,
I could not breathe.

But about us,

I kept loving you more to see
if you would love me back

yet,
I couldn't save you

You couldn't save me

We couldn't save each other

And so when I am ready,

I take another breathe.

I like you so much it hurts

The moon was there when I let you go
Luna fill my heart full

what do i do about him luna



Said

Where is my voice
What happens when you speak, and they do not listen?

Do they pretend not to hear you?
Do they ignore you?

Do I yell louder the things I am seeing
the crimes against us

No.
Then I'll be 'crazy' and no one will listen.

Where is my voice mom
It's been taken away from me

They hear things I do not say
They see things I do not do

They
Said

They
Say

And I'll say to myself
Do I speak if no one will listen?

What is the difference
between silent and silenced

We Are at War

We
Are
At war.

One of the most irreconcilable facts
Is blank pages
Without ever our stories.

Where do I make space
For someone who doesn't have any

The pages.
They're Empty.

Tongue touches with words

Socorro
That's a fire
A flame
Its power

Who that shares my blood shared this power

My love for literature confessed
Shy; In a fifth grade classroom
I remember,

Well

Did they know que habla con sangre

We
Are
At war.
We've been at war.



MI PAÍS

Yo vine por cielo

Ellos vinieron por tierra

My people

I do not know what it's like to climb the mountains for beans at 5 am

I do not know what it's like to visit different countries to collect

To find shoes you can sell for dollars .

I do not know what it is like to make under \$10 a day

Or cómo hacer pupusas al cómale

No se come se hace horchata

No se que es una fiesta

No lo e sentido, el baile de mi país en mi sangre

En mis zapatos

Con mis pies

Topando

El Piso

Don't tell me to be proud of this country

I know where the money comes from

it's dirty

It's funny

They say that the poor never get out of the cycle that they control



B.P.A.T.

The Body Politics Action Team is an organization created in Women's Resource Center at Portland State University. The creation of BPAT came to me through relationship building with my peers, belonging to different nationalities, religions, cultures, languages, and worldviews. Being low income first generation college students, there was intense and equally aweing experiences we faced as we navigated our worlds at home, and entered a new one here. After enrolling in my first women's studies courses, I became painfully tied to making sure every single person I cared about around me was noticing and experiencing their own sense of political awareness or awakening. It was like the world changed; I was no longer poor, there was a class system of oppression and my family was at the bottom of the hierarchy; rape culture and patriarchy were words that began to explain some of the challenges and fears and pains in this world. It was a big knotted mess of privilege and oppression and we all fell somewhere in between. BPAT was created because of the necessity to create a space to understand ourselves and each other better. I wanted and needed to create a space where critical race theory, feminist, and queer theory, as well as indigenous epistemology could be shared to those whom might not otherwise be exposed to its powerful language, and its spirit, and its liberation. I wanted friends and new friends to be a space where they wouldn't feel judged but would feel an obligation to represent themselves and only themselves in the world so stratified. So I got a team of friends together, and the seven of us, not knowing what we were walking into or creating, created BPAT. Years later, and BPAT continues to live. I am excited and honored to continue developing and facilitating this space for my Women's Studies Practicum. I am eager to be able to dedicate more time into creating a location physically and spiritually, where folks can come together from wherever, and show up in whatever authentic state that is, and exchange experiences, learn of new ones, and grow a global compassion that stretches far further than any stratified system ever can.

Adrienne Rich in “Claiming an Education”, states that ‘women's studies are still growing, offering to more and more women a new intellectual grasp on their lives, a new understanding of our history, a fresh vision of the human experience, and also a critical basis for evaluating what they hear and read in other courses and society at large” (609). Rich’s words capture the moment of no return, the discovery that oppression exits, and so does liberation. BPAT can hopefully be an empowering space for moments like these. The movement needs to be carried and we need to make sure it is accessible to all.



ASPSU SENATE CANDIDATES

Senate Candidate Julieta Castro



My name is Julieta Castro, and I am excited and honored to be running as a Senator for ASPSU. In this position, I will have the opportunity to be the communication between students, student organizations, faculty and PSU admin. My duty is to advocate and represent the interests of the student body at large in senate meetings, trainings, action as well as take part in the final proposals for student fee allocation. I am here to create a strong, diverse, effective, and efficient student government.



As a Women's Studies major, and Latino/Chicano Studies minor, I am constantly working to create knowledge about women, gender, race, sexuality, ability, nationality, and more. In this discipline, I have been trained and inspired to observe and critically analyze political structures, cultural structures, social structures, family structures, and even intrapersonal relationship structures, to try and understand and even redistribute power dynamics, in order to create effective social change. In other words, a large part of my undergrad years have been spent developing the analytical skills to identify, and challenge political structures, and the way gender, religion, nationality, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, education, income, citizenship status, and geographic location and other sociodemographic identities are grouped and labeled, while confronting the realities and systematic patterns of injustice, violence, and oppression.

However, beyond the skills I have learned inside the classroom, for the past three years, I have served as a volunteer at our Portland State University Women's Resource Center (currently located in the basement of Montgomery). It is in this space that I have been able to connect my academic theory into practice, it has been a space of learning, challenge, empowerment, and compassion for me. In this space, I have learned how to have difficult conversations, work together, and gain a high emotional intelligence that is committed to student support and empowerment, acknowledging and working to center the different and marginalized identities that make up our communities.

In addition, I have had the chance to become a founder and president of the Body Politics Action Team, a student group interested in looking at how the intersectionalities between gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, health, sexuality, and ability, can serve as a site which fosters self-love and self-care, but also love and care for those around us. Being a part of this community has taught me how to best create social change through nonviolent activism, where I have had the opportunity to develop in my communication skills, organizing skills, team building skills, and budgeting skills so that I may grow in my abilities of creative problem-solving, leadership development, and conflict resolution.

Through my work in this space for many years, I have been able to witness how organizations such as the Women's Resource Center advocate and support members from marginalized communities in understanding their value and power. I hope by sharing some brief information on the community projects that are very meaningful to me, I can demonstrate how I would be able to continue my care and support, beyond the WRC, and offer my time, resources, and imagination to the greater student body.

Wishing of Ballet

She dances to to Puerto Rican Salsa, and the Cumbias of Colombia
But she dances with ballet shoes

With the books of Gloria Anzaldúa and and Cherríe Moraga on the wooden bedroom piso
turned into a studio

A Mestiza,
Half Colonized
Half Colonizer

In the classroom
With a Spanish tongue
But English words

Mi lenguaje y mi baile complicado

Existing in the urban
But I come from the rural

Salvadoreña en América
Bailando y hablando siempre de dos lados
De dos mundos
Al mismo tiempo



A New Dictionary

Love. n

When you want to do so much bad to someone but know you choose good

Hate. n

A frustration towards something that is actually towards yourself

Sad. n

The state of pity and remorse usually towards oneself

Happy. n

A light, weightless, floating sensation when your thoughts are sweet like sugar water and there is lingering fear that it might evaporate any moment

Depression. n

Lacking energy to see the good in things

Fear. n

A barricade or entrapment of self expression because we fear of harm being committed towards who we are

Desperate. n

Feeling so eager to consume everything of that one thing. In other words, wanting to consume everything without listening to the 'drawbacks'

Empty. n

Not really alone but feeling like it

Skinny. n

A skeleton haunting, a drug that kills everybody

Make up. n

The application of pigmented chemical compounds to shield a scared face. Can be used for lengthy periods of time avoiding the apparent consequences.

Fashion. n

Particular clothing selections that evoke a certain mood or potential fond memory

Fur Coat

I felt my fur wrap itself around the bones and curves of my owner. My new owner. She's different than the last one. She layers me on, and I am the fourth and last piece of cloth to cover her. I'm proud that I am the last, you know. I always say to myself I'm the last because I was built to last.

We go outside and I keep her warm. That's my job. It's a fun and important job, you know. Except when it's summer. Then my job is not so fun. Then I just hang. Hang on a hanger whose been overworked from hanging. And I just hang there hoping for the day the first winds of September are strong enough for her to think of me.

Because it's cold for only part of the year, I hang on the clothes rack for months and months at a time. I see lots of things, you know. Like sometimes, she invites people over and they all chat. She cleans her room beforehand. Hangs up other stuff like shirts and cardigans. They move from wood floor to rack. Everyone's always in a good mood when they're moved up. All the coats, and all the jackets, and all the shirts and all the cardigans. We dangle and swing with happiness when we're moved. Moved somewhere good of course...

When her room is clean, and the visitors visit, sometimes other coats will visit too. Leather, wool, denim, or demons as I like to call them. They're all great jackets except for the denims, they're always newish and young, thinking they're a big deal just because they're jeans on coats. Who cares? You can't keep someone warm anyways which is the whole point of a coat, I think.

The cardigans, they're something else. They're like coats who never fully developed. You start to feel bad for 'em after a while. Anyways, they're nice, and professional. Use big words, respectful. As long as they're keeping my owner warm, even a little, that's all that matters. And the shirts. Sheesh! They're too thin and don't keep my owner warm. Why does she even wear them then? She always wears shirts. The fact that they come in lots of different colors and designs doesn't help. They're always chosen first too. But I guess she picks me last because she's saving the best for last.

When a new coat comes, you can tell a lot about the coat's life, and maybe even the owner's. Sometimes she'll have a coat over, and you can't even guess how old it is. The fur is so knotty that you know they've been around for countless Decembers. I have much respect for older coats. Once when I was hanging at the blue used store with other coats, I use to hear stories about jackets and sweaters that have been around since the wars of the past. Talk about veterans! Sheesh!

Or sometimes, you'll run into a coat so worn and torn that's not from war, and you think to yourself, the owner either loved 'em so much, or didn't care too much for 'em. Life is rough for some coats you know. Even a clothes rack can be a scary place. Clothes and coats always coming and going like the seasons. Some never come back. It's a scary thing you know. Sometimes you're chosen off the hanger and you start thinking all sorts of stuff, like about the blue used store.

You don't really know why owners send you away after some time. Maybe your warmth isn't enough sometimes. You can keep them warm but sometimes they'll still be cold, and

maybe no coat can fix that. But it's an important job to try you know? You just hang there and hope for the best. To be worn and keep someone warm of course.

I've been around a little while myself, actually. I look worn, but not worn out. This is my fourth home; I like it, it's nice. It's colder here. And this owner is caring. I'm washed often so that's why I feel cared about. I didn't get washed in the past. Or worn. Plus, I'm not hanging in some dark closet. Or on the racks of some blue used store. I'm hanging in her room. I would hang all day for her. I like to keeping people warm. It's an important job, the job of a coat you know.





"Demand Change" 2018
20' x 42"
Julieta Castro

WHO BUILT ME:

My research inherently builds upon the foundations of writers and activists before me. Their art and words remain long after they do, and their voices continue to speak for, and with, disenfranchised members of society today who fight for their own voice, their survival. Drawing from feminist, queer, and critical race theory, alongside indigenous epistemologies, there is much literature available and many writers who speak to the value of critical yet creative productions of expression and narrative. What seems like abundant resources to draw from, I primarily observe and situate my work on several writers and visionaries, recognizing there are many more both known and unknown who have developed a voice of resistance and reclaiming.

Currently, primary writings on my topic will include the works of Karina Oliva Alvarado's *Central Americans Reconstructing Memories, Struggles, and Communities of Resistance*, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza*, Alexa Chung's *It*, bell hooks' "Theory as Liberatory Practice", Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's "Research through Imperial Eyes", Linda Alcoff's "The Problem of Speaking for Others", Patricia Hill Collins' "Black Feminist Epistemology", Audre Lorde's "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action", and Aída Hurtado's "Relating to Privilege: Seduction and Rejection in the Subordination of White Women and Women of Color". Roughly one third of the literature I utilize are primary examples that demonstrate reflexive and creative productions of truth, knowledge, reclaiming and resistance. Another section of my archive speaks directly to the importance, necessity, and value of voice and narrative as part of resistance and survival. A primary theory and principle

guiding my research is Anzaldúa's 'auto-historia' and her theoretical framework that centers her as the object of her own study, on which to understand society at large, and the operations occurring within an extensive and pervasive network of domination. The last third of the literature in which I situate my own research and knowledge production will incorporate writings that directly analyze the power dynamics in which uphold US. Imperialism, continued colonization, and white supremacy through a violent covert or overt State apparatus.

Despite the rich literature that informs not only my oppression, but my liberation, I produced a multimedia memoir incorporating multiple forms of communication such as poetry, prose, photography, song, microfiction, and collage, to explore how these forms of expression can work together in the writing process to produce a powerful personal and collective message speaking to the experiences of colonization to the land, the body, the mind, and the spirit. I have not yet encountered a multimedia memoir that deploys a decolonial lens speaking to the subject of systematic, social, and physical domination and I am excited to be a Salvadoran artist contributing to the body of knowledge on Imperialism in this style. My sources of inspiration for the multimedia memoir draw from fashion writers, and it is exciting to have the opportunity to express myself in new, and holistic ways that will deploy authenticity and power.

However, because I understand how college is an opportunity not many will get, especially low income, refugees, or immigrants, being a student for the last four years has been truly a gift. Aunque estudiando solita por 4 años es algo bien lindo y bien poderoso, a fin del día nunca olvido que privilegio es estar en una academia. Todo lo que hago, es para mi familia, para enseñar y compartir lo que yo he aprendido. I never learn for myself, I always learn to teach others, and I can't help it. Below are writers, visionaries, leaders, creators, and heroines that have

built me, given me a language tool box on which to speak up for myself. This list is little. There are many more. I hope in that revealing my archive, I will make these voices more accessible to you, the way they were to me. I hope that they save you, like they saved me. A roughly detailed list of key sources for your convenience listed below:

Alcoff, Linda. "The Problem of Speaking for Others." *Cultural Critique*, vol. 20, no. 20, 1991, pp. 5–32

Alcoff in "Speaking for Others" is able to present multifaceted considerations of Voice and self representation as well as the complexities that arise with group representation. Alcoff asks "is it ever valid to speak for others unlike me or who are less privileged than me" (7)? As I continue to expand and formulate my memoir, these are questions which have subconsciously caused nervous panic in my validity as a writer, and a member of many subjected and marginalized groups.

Alvarado, Karina Oliva, et al. *U.S. Central Americans Reconstructing Memories, Struggles, and Communities of Resistance*. The University of Arizona Press, 2017.

This book is a significant compilation of many Central American scholarly, and artistic productions such as peer reviewed articles, memoirs, testimonies, poetry, prose, and other academic scholarship. The contributors of this text offer stories of resistance and resilience living as both members of U.S. society, and Salvadoran nationality, while confronting the realities of U.S. Imperialism. This collection offers nine chapters that explore a range of interdisciplinary topics that hope to inform an understanding of oppression across ethnic, gender, class, and generational divides. The productions in this book allow me to see how others in my social location and positionality produce knowledge not only for for themselves but for their communities. The diverse methods and memories offered me with much guidance and information on how to produce my very own collection of stories.

Anzaldúa Gloria. *Borderlands / La Frontera: the New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 2012.

This book by Gloria Anzaldúa profoundly challenged, and continue to challenge how I think about identity and my identity. Anzaldúa engages in theorizing using herself and her experiences as the basis for critiquing and understanding systems of oppression, and I value how she remains critical while also opening herself up vulnerably. In her work, Anzaldúa is able to disrupt dominant perceptions of knowledge and knowledge production through her critical self reflective perspectives and medications, in a fusion of culture, sexuality, ancestry, and spirituality, to produce information on white supremacy. I find her work inspirational and an important example of a writing process I myself find very important and valuable would love to. I chose to engage in this process myself.

Butler, Judith. “Bodies That Matter.” *Feminist Theory and the Body*, 2017, pp. 235–245.

In this piece, Butler explores a. How bodies become materialized and objectified as matter, and b. Which bodies do and do not matter. Butler also explores ‘sex’ as a social construct, coded and defined under heteropatriarchal capitalist conditions, leaving not only gender, but sex as performative. This analysis shakes my foundations and pushes my limits of what I take as fact, what I take as truth, what I take as order.

Collins, Patricia Hill “Black Feminist Epistemology.” *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015, pp. 269–290.

This scholar explores the critical ways that Black womxn have resisted and continue to resist dominant forms of knowledge and knowledge production. My piece is very much interested in centralizing cultural productions of knowledge and culture, and her perspectives give clear and profound understanding of how domination is occurring under Western White Supremacist regimes that exist covertly or overtly.

Cisneros, Sandra. *A House of My Own : Stories from My Life*. First ed., Alfred A. Knopf, 2015.

As a Latina writer whose books have now become part of primary school book lists, I find her work to be immensely inspirational. *A House of My Own* almost innocently exposes and brings to light very critical topics and politics of contemporary America, and her writing and voice are not traditional, she defies the norms of what it is to be in academia, and how to sound, that is why I gravitate towards her work.

Chung, Alexa. *It*. Penguin, 2014.

Alexa Chung's *It* is a book in the form of a multimedia memoir. The perspective employed by Chung, is one where she is able to navigate and explore the experiences of her life focusing on particular themes such as fashion, coming of age, and preservation of history and self. Her text, and the ways her polaroids, text, and poetry work together in the writing process, alongside her particular effeminate visual style and design, provides a rich example of a methodology filled with creativity, attraction, and visual richness, and it serves as a grand inspiration to the formant of my own memoir. In the age of technology and intense visual saturation, it becomes important not only what you say; but how you say it. While Chung's text is perhaps not considered 'academic' and not deemed as valuable or credible in institutions of education, I see this cultural production as an important foundation to my own development as not only as writer, but a creative.

Hurtado, Aída. "Relating to Privilege: Seduction and Rejection in the Subordination of White Women and Women of Color." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1989, pp. 833–55.

"By the time women of color reach adulthood, we have developed informal political skills to deal with State intervention. The political skills required by feminists of Color are neither the conventional political skills of the White power structure that White liberal feminists have adopted nor the free-spirited approaches of white radical feminists. Instead, feminists of Color train to be urban guerrillas by doing battle every day with the apparatus of the state. Their tactics are not recorded or published for others to study and are often misunderstood by white middle-class feminists...these fighting capabilities are not codified for women of color to learn" (Hurtado 1989, 853).

Heiner, Brady T. and Sarah K. Tyson. 2017. "Feminism and the Carceral State: Gender-Responsive Justice, Community Accountability, and the Epistemology of Antiviolence." *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 3

This piece provides a unique perspective on the prison industrial complex and offers a unique social justice model known as 'community accountability', where instead of viewing criminals as monsters, as a collective community we consider the ways in which privilege and systems of oppression contribute to the crime itself. Through a community accountability model the aim is "transform the roots of violence" and demands for a "Multidimensional holism" which entails the "consideration of multiple perspectives, including those of survivors, community allies, and those doing harm, and consensus through collective negotiation of goals". The word criminal in itself serves to alienate an individual stripping them from opportunity to grow, and reconcile. Like trash or other inanimate objects, we practice the toxic act of disposability, further dehumanizing not only each other

but all other pieces of our planet. The theme of disposability will be central to my analysis and critique of our social, economic, and political structures.

hooks, bell. "Theory as Liberatory Practice. (Feminism in the 90s: Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice)." *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1991, pp. 1–12

This peer reviewed article written by bell hooks adopts a critical theoretical paradigm that works to dismantle the binary separation that often occurs in feminist knowledge production, and the relationship between engaging in theory and engaging in practice. hooks argues that upholding this binary assumes that praxis cannot be achieved simultaneously as one engages with theory and states that theorizing is inherent to lived experience and vice versa, these two sites for knowledge are always in constant exchange and communication with each other to produce knowledge. I find hooks' piece as one that speaks strongly to the type of work I am interested in achieving and participate in a process of healing as well, as I make sense of my social positions and oppressions. Her methodology is admirable as she shows how theory and lived experience combine on the page, and in her reality.

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2013.

A book by an indigenous woman who became a botanist. She holds knowledge not only from academia, but her community and indigenous ways of knowing. This writer navigates the world with a love for the plant world and people in a way that has completely captured my heart, and taught me what it's like to live a life valuing all lives, even the rocks, the weeds, and the mud. Her perspective offers me with abundant ways to decolonize my mind and spirit and practice social and

environmental sustainability. This text offers a concept of holism that I am still trying to absorb and understand. The values for sustainability and compassion will serve as inspiration for my writing piece, and ideologies of an oppression free world.

Lorde, Audre. "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Crossing Press, 2007, pp. 40–45.

Lorde powerfully considers what occurs when silence occurs, and how "silence will not save you" This is a central message within this speech, and highlights that much more the importance of speaking one's truth even vulnerably in the face of oppression and harm. This was a strong foundation for the reason I wrote this collection and want to heal from my traumas.

Uma Narayan, "Cross Cultural Connections, Border Crossings, and 'Death by Culture". *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism*, by Uma Narayan, Taylor and Francis, 2013, pp. 85–120

Narayan presents an intricate display of Western misrepresentations and cultural misunderstanding that occurs, particularly with perceptions regarding violence against women in India and dowry murder. Through Narayan's comparative study, they demonstrate how dominant Western feminists and perspectives in regards to transnational women and violence are really lacking an understanding for the social, cultural, geographical and economic circumstances Indian women survive or die from. These very limited views and simplified understandings not only distort the knowledge, but produce that distortion in ways hardly brings about support for these communities and instead participate in glamorization, mystification, and stereotyping that characterizes different regions and cultures of the world as "Third world backwardness" (70). I will use Narayan's study to explore how the presence of 'culture' and "very Other cultures" operate in very

harmful ways, providing a “very swift explanation” for what Americans do not understand (70).

Razack, Sherene H. “Gendering Disposability.” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2016, pp. 285–307.

This feminist study analyzes and assesses the violence and murder of indigenous women. Beyond its painful observations, Razack makes strong connections between the physical body and the ways in which white supremacy dominate the skin. Her piece provided me with powerful statements in which to critically interrogate how power operates on the human body.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977.

Susan Sontag, in this memoir book, explores how the photographic image is continually inserted between experience and reality. While she explores many themes, such as the male gaze, ‘transparency’, preservation, authenticity, and the production of visual imageries and realities, this work furthers my understanding of how written language can interact with visual language to produce a distorted or ‘ordered’ representation of the photographer’s reality as it attempts to capture the subject’s reality. Her memoir is composed of a unique ratio between text and photograph, and I believe this text to be relevant because it provides me with an example of the possibilities I can create with simultaneous visual and textual representations.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. “Research through Imperial Eyes” *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books; University of Otago Press, 1999. pp 55-67

Smith examines how science, and the empirical tower of knowledge production reduces the world into violent forms of classification, categorization, and

measurement, in ways that are harmful to subjects living within and beyond the Western world. Smith announces how the Western system of knowledge are profoundly exploitive and insidiously produce cultural orientation of European worldviews and values.



We are the Immortal

I will always be a part
of history.

I am always alive
And can never die.

Because I live
Trying to stop
The attacks
To the land
The body
The spirit

I have been alive since the the settlers came
And made the lines
That drew violence and kill.

My body is borrowed
From the soil
The sun
And the moon.

My breathe asking the air for one more chance
My lips forever asking the water
My blood, asking for the drops
Of people who fell before me

The metal stars pierce the dark sky
Like Love pierces the war

I cannot die,
For I exist in every word of freedom.



no one from the city



is really over
from the city