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Critical Race Insights from the Corazon/Heart:
Pedagogy and Practice toward Healing in Ethnic
Studies

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“We, professors of Ethnic Studies, are healers.” Dr. Toni-Mokjaetji Humber

Recently I had the opportunity to reflect upon my career in the field of Ethnic Studies and more specifically Chicana/o Studies with my esteemed colleague Dr. Toni-Mokjaetji Humber. Toni is a professor of Ethnic and Women’s Studies at California State University. I am a new assistant professor of Chicana/o Studies at CSU. During our reflection I shared my concerns and pains as a “junior”¹ faculty in Chicana/o Studies. Reliving my experience of my “freshmen year” of teaching, I shared emotion, happiness, concern, passion, and the desire to hold my students with love. I also expressed how these feelings are complex when maintaining the high expectations of these students in order to promote success. I became overwhelmed, and, in that instance, Toni shared the above epigraph, “We, professors of Ethnic Studies are healers.” With that simple but powerful statement, I felt supported, understood, empowered, and responsible all at the same time.

As a result of the aforementioned discussion, I am pushed to critically examine the pedagogical tools I apply in my Ethnic Studies teaching and the educational practice I follow outside of the classroom. I ask, in what ways do I promote healing and empowerment for my students and community? What follows is the theoretical pedagogical discussion focusing on my teaching and educational practice external and internal to the classroom as a teacher of Chicana/o Studies and Ethnic Studies. My goal is to provide insight regarding theory, pedagogy, and practice outside of the classroom that may continue to promote emancipatory and decolonial teaching in higher education. In so doing I hope to offer tools to support the work of other “healers” in Ethnic Studies.

In entering my reflection, I am encouraged and pushed in a critical manner by Rodolfo Acuña’s analysis of the historical formation of Ethnic Studies (8-9). Acuña reminds us of the history of student activism in the formation of Ethnic Studies; particularly the formation of Chicana/o Studies during the civil rights era. He encourages the critical exploration of historical and contemporary teaching practices in the field. Most importantly, his discussion compels me to consider how I teach race and oppression in the classroom and how I provide spaces for decolonial intellectual exploration.

In the following pages, I attempt to answer Acuña’s, challenge. First, I ground my discussion in the tradition of Critical Race Theory in education, a field that explores how race, racism, and other forms of subordination impact the educational experiences and trajectories of People of Color² (Ochoa, Benavides Lopez, Solórzano, 197-198; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano; Solórzano, “Images”; Solórzano “Critical Race Theory”; Yosso “Critical Race Counterstories”).

¹ I use the term “junior” faculty in quotations because I strongly feel that the concept of any of us in Ethnic Studies being “junior” is misleading and discounting. My experience has been that many Ethnic Studies professionals hold years of experience in community social justice work that directly inform our work in the classroom. Many times we arrive to Ethnic Studies from other educational responsibilities that also informs our work and teaching in the academy. I arrived to the Ethnic Studies professoriate with almost 20 years of leadership experience in the community sector and field of education on the both the administrative and teaching end. Thus, to be called “junior” is to participate in hierarchal discourse that, ironically, Ethnic Studies questions and critically challenges.

² I capitalize the terms People of Color, Women of Color, Students of Color, etc. as a rejection of standard grammatical norm to empower these communities and represent a grammatical move toward social and racial justice.

My discussion specifically focuses on higher education pedagogy defined as Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP) (Lynn, 615; Ochoa, Benavides Lopez, Solórzano, 197-198). I then provide a theoretical critical reflection on testimonio (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga and Carmona), autoethnography (Berger & Ellis, 161-176; Davis, 533-535) and autohistoria (Anzaldúa “Borderlands”; Saldivar-Hull introduction to “Borderlands”), the family “telling case” (Mitchell “Case Studies and “Case and Situation”) and experience-based activities and dialogue in ethnic and Chicana/o Studies teaching. The goal of the following discussion is the exploration of and reflection on pedagogical practices that promote healing and love³ in the classroom from the *corazon/heart*.

Critical Race Pedagogy in Ethnic Studies

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the interdisciplinary work of legal scholars who seek to provide an explanatory framework to account for the role of race and racism in the United States (Bell, “Race American Law”, “Teacher’s Manual”; Delgado and Stefancic). Central to CRT is identifying and challenging racism as part of a larger goal to illuminate and challenge all forms of subordination such as class oppression, sexism, and immigrant xenophobia and homophobia (Delgado and Stefancic). I ground the scholarship of CRT educational scholars in order to understand the racialized experiences of People of Color in U.S. education (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano; Solórzano, “Images”; Solórzano “Critical Race Theory”; Yosso “Critical Race Counterstories”). In order to further theorize and grapple with how race and racism impact marginalized communities in education, pedagogical questions emerge. I move toward Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP) alongside Ochoa, Benavides Lopez, and Solórzano, who locate it within the scholarly and academic tradition of CRT in education (197-198).

Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP) is defined as a pedagogical framework that serves to illuminate the multiple layers of oppression Students of Color experience in the classroom through pedagogy and practice (Lynn, 615; Ochoa, Benavides Lopez, Solórzano, 197-198). The following tenets serve as a framing of (CRP) as provided by Ochoa, Benavides Lopez, and Solórzano (197-198):

1. CRP foregrounds the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism with multiple forms of subordination, such as gender, class, immigration status, language, phenotype, and sexuality as experienced in our teaching and curriculum.
2. CRP challenges the dominant ideologies, traditional research, and pedagogical paradigms used to explain and teach the experiences faced by Students of Color.
3. CRP is committed to social justice and transformation of social oppression for communities of color in educational settings through teaching and curriculum.
4. CRP acknowledges, honors, and incorporates the experiential knowledge of students, parents, and communities of color through various critical pedagogies.

³ Here I consider discussions and definitions of love provided by Freire (Ch. 1) and hooks (Ch. 11). Freire defines a type of love in teaching that moves away from dehumanizing and alienating community. Similarly, hooks challenges the idea of objectivity in teaching that promotes domination. hooks argues, “Where there is domination there is no place for love” (p. 128). Therefore, the love and teaching from the *corazon/heart* I speak about is an act of connecting to students through pedagogy that allows for healing from the oppressive dehumanization and alienation experienced in U.S. education.

5. CRP challenges ahistoricism and acontextualism, and insists on expanding the boundaries of the analysis of race and racism in education by using contextual, historical, and interdisciplinary perspectives to inform our teaching and curriculum.

As a framework, CRP provides an opportunity for reflexivity a la Paulo Freire, who encourages self-critique by teachers (Freire). As a teacher, I find Freire's promotion of "conscientização," consciousness or realization through dialogue and critical inquiry, a powerful tool. This type of dialogue is more than just "talking" or sharing intellectual thoughts and responses to text. It is a process of inquiry and facilitating discussion in which participants apply their lived-experience as a method to connect to the text. In the classroom, this is done so through sharing feelings and dialogue regarding the text and responding to thoughts shared by one with another in a critical manner using a text as point of analysis. Most importantly, the facilitator enters into dialogue by sharing lived-experience, requiring vulnerability, and then posing critical questions regarding the text by relating the discourse to community, self, and the students. By creating a learning space that promotes "conscientização" through dialogue, I am constantly reflecting on how I may challenge and dismantle student-teacher hierarchies. This is where my experiential knowledge and interdisciplinary perspective as stated in CRP tenets four and five, are essential to this process. The CRP framework facilitates self-reflexivity around my own pedagogical technique and practice helping me to examine how I both teach and/or limit myself in teaching Chicana/o Studies and Ethnic Studies. Most importantly, CRP honors the experience of the pedagogue, and allows for me to look inward and explore my teaching and practice from the corazon/heart.

Pedagogy from the Corazon/Heart: Living Experience in the Classroom

Acuña claims that many Chicana/o Studies and Ethnic Studies educators who teach racism (and for the purposes of this discussion, other forms of oppression) fail to incorporate students' lived experiences in the pedagogy and curriculum of the classroom.⁴ As a CRT scholar, pedagogue, and self-identified "Freirean," I find Acuña's challenge urgent. His challenge illuminates the value of a CRP in Chicana/o Studies and Ethnic Studies because it provides a lens that may support understanding for how students experience, reflect upon, and challenge multiple oppressions. In my classroom, this is by providing a space to center experiential knowledge. And central to this discussion is the question: how do I effectively challenge traditional pedagogical frames that may perpetuate systems of oppression in the classroom in order to teach from the corazon/heart?

As I continue to practice CRP Freirean reflexivity regarding my research, pedagogy, and practice, I must ask myself, how does my work and that of my students' promote a CRT, Feminist, Ethnic Studies perspective with corazon/heart/love in order to reach a place of healing? How does one teach from the heart when unpacking the multiple layers of pain and oppression that students find themselves challenging when they first encounter Chicana/o Studies, Africana Studies, Asian American Studies, Native American Studies and Women and Gender Studies?

⁴ Acuña, in his discussion of the historical formation of Ethnic Studies, notes that fundamentally this field is fundamentally rooted in the practice of teaching to achieve academic success for Students of Color. In his discussion, he notes Freire's problem-posing theory as a tool to advance Chicana/o education and highlights the idea that the foundation of Ethnic Studies in the value of incorporating community in curriculum, pedagogy, and practice for the purposes of promoting educational achievement for Students of Color.

How do I actively incorporate Freire's idea of generative themes/codes⁵ to help the text become more relevant for students through my pedagogy (Freire Chapter 3)? These questions guide me directly to tenant number four of CRP, which centers and honors students' experiential knowledge in the classroom. This tenet allows for the student's personal voice and that of their family and community to guide their critical analysis and thinking of the text. The following are examples of specific pedagogical tools centering the experiential knowledge which students arrive with to the classroom.

Theorizing testimonio autoethnography and autohistoria as pedagogy

The first pedagogical tools I reflect upon are testimonio (testimony or testimonial), autoethnography, and autohistoria. In so doing, I express and recognize how teaching and theorizing testimonio in the classroom constitutes resistance to the emotional and physical fragmentation academia produces, thereby allowing one to teach with *corazon/heart*, i.e. from a place of love (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga and Flores Carmona 367).⁶ Specifically, I pull from my experience in teaching an undergraduate course on theories and research methods in Chicana/o Studies, in which students produced digital auto-testimonios as capstone projects (See Appendix A: Theories and Methods Course).

The exploration of autoethnography, autohistoria and testimonio emerges from my doctoral dissertation, *Las Fronteras de Nuestra Educación: Documenting the Pedagogies of Migration of Mexican and Chicana/o Undocumented Immigrant Households* (Benavides Lopez). Applying autoethnography/autohistoria as a method in unearthing my own family's undocumented immigration history allowed for the illumination and humanizing of the larger socio-historical and political context experienced by undocumented immigrant families in the U.S. In applying these qualitative research methods of documenting and historicizing my family's immigration history into my teaching, I consciously encourage and guide students to center their personal stories of struggle and survival in order to produce their digital auto-testimonios.

In the aforementioned theories and research methods in Chicana/o Studies course, students recaptured their personal story through theorizing, writing poetry, sharing family archives and pictures, "drawing" theory, problematizing privilege and power, and providing each other with feedback. The auto-testimonios encouraged and empowered students to center their own cultural history and experiential knowledge. The digital auto-testimonios required students to look inward and critically analyze their history. Many of the students found this a powerful way to give voice to their families' experiences and that of others who face similar forms of oppression. The assignment of producing a auto-testimonio allowed them to heal wounds of oppression, community struggle, while also illuminating their community's historical silences. These historical silences are defined as a third space that Emma Perez names "interstitial third space." Perez argues that it is within this interstitial third space where the historical voices of oppression and survival reside. As an outcome, students produced powerful, insightful, and

⁵ Freire (Chapter 3) discusses the ideas of "generative themes" which are representations of life that help promote dialogue regarding one's social position. The items, which in teaching can be the text, art, films, an inanimate object, are utilized to promote a problem-posing dialogue process. Such dialogue promotes analysis of the causes of the problem in order to arrive to a place of consciousness.

⁶ Also see diverse set of articles and voices regarding testimonio in education published in the 2012 special edition of *Equity and Excellence in Education* edited by Delgado Bernal, Burciaga and Flores Carmona.

theoretically enriching digital auto-testimonios that allowed for dialogue and healing. In this practice, students came to recognize the importance of their own *corazon/heart* in how they produce research theory. Furthermore, the process of teaching testimonio pushed me as a critical pedagogue.

Teaching testimonio requires dialogue to help students understand how the theory and method allows for the reclamation of the personal story through the documentation of struggle against oppression (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga and Carmona 363-364). Because testimonio challenges the idea of objectivity in research, the individual sharing their testimony shares their personal story of struggle and triumph to the researcher in order to illuminate a collective experience. The idea is that the act of telling and documenting the personal story promotes a message of resistance to oppressive silence common in academic research and history (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga & Carmona).

For this course on research methods and theory in Chicana/o Studies the students were asked to study and explore autoethnography and autohistoria. Autoethnography is a combination of ethnography and autobiography (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont; Berger & Ellis). Thus, autoethnography can be considered a conscious method of capturing one's insider positionality while moving away from traditional and accepted Western ideas of research that claim to be objective and neutral (Atkinson et. al.; Berger & Ellis; Chavez). In a similar tradition, autohistoria is a type of self-analysis and study of one's past that results in historical narrative beyond traditional self-portraiture or autobiography that takes Chicana epistemological sensitivities into account (Anzaldúa; Saldivar-Hull introduction to "Borderlands"). In other words, autohistoria is a personal testimonial method that allows for a theorizing of history. This theorizing of history results in a revised historical narrative that takes into account the struggle against and survival of oppression resulting in a revisionist historical document, i.e. auto-testimonio.

As professor, and more specifically from a *Mujerista*⁷ standpoint, the pedagogical process I apply in teaching testimonio requires me to be vulnerable with my students and to share my personal auto-testimonio/autoethnography/autohistoria about struggles specific to my experience in the U.S. as an undocumented immigrant. Teaching testimonio further requires I bear the responsibility of guiding students through dialogue, inquiry and self-reflexivity (Freire) toward awareness of how Western traditional research methods and methodologies may fail to validate my students' racialized and gendered experiences as People of Color (Galvan; Chavez). Because this project was an auto-testimonio process, the students, as testimonialistas⁸/researchers and participants, were in constant reflection as to how the theories and methods studied directly related to their personal and larger community struggles.

Initially, the students resisted the auto-testimonio assignment and the "Freirean" dialogic process. They claimed it felt "weird" and "unofficial" to produce research focused on their own personal lives and struggles and to talk about how the material impacted or directly connected to their lives in a "circle-setting." They also expressed disbelief as to how "historical" theory about people of African nations (Memmi) or the Australian Maori people (Tuhiwai Smith), for

⁷ Ruth Trinidad Galvan defines *Mujerista* as a Latina womanist (164). Her definition is in direct relation to Alice Walker's *Womanist* concept in which spirituality informs feminisms to include community and family (xi-xii). See Walker's *In Search of our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose*.

⁸ Delgado Bernal, Burciaga and Carmona define *testimonialista* as an individual who is giving a testimonio or sharing their story (371, note 1). For the purposes of auto-testimonio work, a *testimonialista* is one who may be defined as a researcher, scholar, activist whom produces and records testimonios.

example, directly related to their personal story or to Chicana/o community experiences. Throughout the semester, students faced difficult moments of awareness. For example, they expressed anger and tears through dialogue in sharing their most personal struggles regarding issues of family separation due to undocumented immigration status, body image, drug addiction, coming out as lesbian, and educational oppression to name a few. Furthermore, they shared their pain about feeling “censored” in their academic experience, even in the field of Chicana/o Studies. As a professor, the process required an intuitive guidance of the dialogue that allowed for me to teach from the *corazon/heart*. By connecting to the love I held for the students as a teacher, in the end, this process was transformative and personally empowering.

The goal of my pedagogy was to provide students space to immerse themselves in texts that are seminal in Chicana/o and Ethnic Studies. Such texts included varied CRT scholarly works (Montoya; Yosso; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal), Chicana feminist educational theory and research methods (Delgado Bernal; Calderon et. al), including Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Perez’s *The Decolonial Imaginary*, and Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies*. But it was the dialogue central to each text that we engaged in as a community that promoted *corazon/heart* from me as the teacher and from each of them as they “took care” of one another in their process. I also asked them to view selected films such as *Men with Guns* (Sayles), and *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Noyce) and to write responses bridging the theories from our texts and the experiences portrayed in the films. Our dialogues regarding how People of Color experience oppression globally helped us to gain a critical understanding of how traditional research methodologies often fail to validate transformative research practices in education.

Through the duration of the course and the varied assignments, the students developed awareness of how Chicana/o and Ethnic Studies importantly rely upon theories and research methods that honor marginalized communities. Subsequently, I as a teacher was able to continue experiencing how Chicana/o and Ethnic Studies employ radical pedagogical and research practices (Calderon, et. al). Ultimately, the analysis of auto-testimonio as research method, this course allowed for a synthesis of theory and practice inclusive of autoethnography, autohistoria, and digital CRT counter-storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso)⁹ and transformative reflexive praxis (Freire).

The family “telling case” as pedagogy

In witnessing my students grow and gain *conocimiento/awareness*¹⁰ in producing auto-testimonios, I turn to the work on Chicana Feminist Epistemologies, cultural intuition and cultural sensitivity to continue exploring my teaching practice (Delgado Bernal 570-573; Calderon, et. al 551-516). The practice of cultural intuition in my teaching emerges from my own personal process of *conocimiento/awareness* I developed while writing my doctoral dissertation previously mentions where I applied the family telling case research method. The

⁹ As discussed by Solórzano and Yosso, a counter-story is a CRT method of telling the story of survival and resistance against race and racism and multiple forms of oppression in the U.S. In this course students had the opportunity to tell their personal story of struggle and survival through their digital auto-testimonios, i.e. their CRT counter-story. The digital format was used to provide students a visual and textual method of sharing their counter-story through family pictures, archives, documents, art, and music.

¹⁰ In reading Anzaldúa, her definition of *conocimiento* is gained through several levels of consciousness. Loosely defined, *conocimiento* encompasses a spiritual, social, spatial consciousness and awareness. See Anzaldúa “*Conocimiento*.”

family telling case method allowed me to practice my personal Chicana Feminist Epistemology, which includes honoring my personal lived-experience, existing literature, professional training/perspective and analytical perspective, in my pedagogy it allows me to push critical boundaries in teaching and research.

According to Clyde Mitchell, a “telling case” is a case study with circumstances that shed light on “previously obscure theoretical relationships” (“Case Studies” 239). A “telling case” is an “illuminating” case study that may clarify theoretical connections and analytical questions (Mitchell, “Case Studies” 239). A “telling case” is not a “typical case,” which traditionally strives to reinforce or produce generalizations of a specific population, culture, or society (Mitchell, “Case and Situation” 192; “Case Studies” 239). Rather, as a research method and pedagogical practice, the construction of a “telling case” is considered heuristic; its purpose is to build a new theory and/or to strengthen existing theoretical concepts (Mitchell, “Case and Situation” 196). A “telling case” study, then, focuses on a singular and contained representative body or set of actors that may help illuminate socially contextualized phenomena in order to build theoretical analysis.

In producing their own individual family “telling case,” students are given the opportunity to excavate familial histories through oral history, observations, family documents/archival research and analysis. Documenting their family’s history and identity enables students to better understand the theoretical as well as socio-historical content of the course material. These connections fulfill my pedagogical goal of intersecting theory and practice. “Telling cases” further encourage students to actualize theoretical insights by interacting with their family members.

Moving into consciousness: Experience-based activities and dialogue

Providing students the space to explore how People of Color experience oppression comes with difficulties, even in Ethnic Studies. While texts introduced in Chicana/o and Ethnic Studies are vital to promoting socio-political and racial consciousness, teaching students in these fields requires processes that promote experience-centered learning in order to deepen the connection to the issues. What aids me in teaching issues like race, class, gender, immigration status, and sexuality is creating opportunities for students to connect the lived-experiences of their community to the texts. I reach this goal by developing and conducting what I call in-class “experience-based activities and dialogues.” These experience-based activities explore specific human relations issues such as race relations, gender relations, social class divisions, etc., in order to promote community-centered experiential learning (See Appendix C: Experience-Based Activity and Dialogue). Facilitated activities promote critical thinking and conflict resolution through a dialogic learning process in which students apply the text and course themes to their lived-experience through movement and “forced answer/choice” pedagogy. As exemplified in Appendix C this activity requires students to choose from a selected number of answers regarding categorical identities “forcing” them to make a choice and not take a “neutral” stand that then allows for dialogue.

The activities are designed to “force” students to recognize socially constructed/artificial separations in society that result in social divisions, inequalities, and silence by requiring they move in the room from one sign that stands as an answer to a statement or question provided by the facilitator/teacher at center or head of the room. They may be asked to physically move into the center of a circle in agreement or step forward two steps if a statement applies to them. For

example in an exercise regarding gender oppression the following statements and reflection are read: statement “Take two steps into the circle if you are a man,” reflection “If you are at the center, consider what it means to be a man in today’s society regarding power and access to resources.” As the course moves throughout the semester and we come across various themes, I create dialogue-based or “Freirean” activities for the students to explore the topics and address the conflict about these topics.

Artificially separating students’ interdependent identities and simultaneously “forcing” them to move in order to identify with an answer, allows students to bear witness to the pain caused by systems of particular oppressions. In other words, to face the wound. The physical movement guides students to be present with how they truly feel at that particular moment regarding the question they answered depending on the theme of the exercise. They are guided to connect to the *corazon*/heart and the hurt that silencing this oppression causes. I require students to connect to their feelings of pain, shame, anger, and frustration about oppression through dialogue and ask them to answer discussion questions or to silently reflection upon comments during the exercise. I push students to develop their own clarification of intersectionality and how interlocking systems of oppression function and cause social division. Shifting from one place to another to answer and reflect upon these difficult questions, students embark upon a process of raising *conocimiento*/awareness and around varied issues depending on the theme chosen. In this marginal space of movement, in the sense of shifting or not belonging, the real work toward and healing the *corazon*/heart begins.

Importantly, healing from the *corazon*/heart does not start with the physicality of the experienced-based exercise. The healing truly occurs in the dialogic process set up to discuss the socially constructed divisions explored through the exercise. I further center dialogue about their feelings and conversations around “what did you learn about yourself and your community” connections. Most importantly, the success of this process is strengthened and validated as the facilitator/teacher/pedagogue models and shares the pain regarding difficult themes related to oppression. When I model and exhibit true vulnerability, or my *corazon*/heart, through sharing of my story as an immigrant Woman of Color, students are able to follow my example of theorizing and sharing my experience. I am intentional about asking students about the ways specific themes in assigned readings or lecture material fit into designed exercises while inserting my own insight and personal connection to the discussion. While the exercise may result in a dynamic dialogic process and a sense of community healing, often the process requires simply “sitting with the silence”. In so doing I trust the students to sift through feelings of confusion and pain connected to coming to consciousness about their own multiple oppressions. The trust I instill in my students is an act of love and teaching from *corazon*/heart (Freire, Ch. 1; hooks, Ch 11).

Pedagogy honoring students’ experience-based knowledge allows for learning to take place in what Emma Perez identifies as interstitial third space. Perez argues silenced histories, identities, and ancestral wisdom reside within this third space, and must be decolonized from the silence, a process she names “The Decolonial Imaginary.” Anzaldúa names a similar process and ambiguous space *Nepantla*, “the zone between changes where you struggle between the outer expression of change and your inner relationship to it (“*Conocimiento*” 548-549). This space, many times unexplored, repressed, and “torn between ways,” as Anzaldúa (549) states, is found in that area of shifting between the text and the students’ experiential knowledge of their personal and larger sociopolitical contexts. This area is where possibilities for awareness, consciousness and resistance against the structured banking method of passive learning may occur (Freire,

Ch.2). Within physical movement, reflection, and community dialogue, students are provided an avenue for theorizing and producing “theory in the flesh.”¹¹ Anzaldúa calls this break from our mental and emotional prison; an emotional prison, she argues, that is reinforced vis-a-vis the Eurocentric educational learning processes. Anzaldúa names this break *el arrebató* or the shocking break/a snap that allows for awareness, or a spiritual process of consciousness, acceptance, and how we relate to the self and others (“*Conocimiento*,” 546). The process of *conocimiento* in the classroom gained from reflection and the direct application of dialogic teaching and learning directly challenges self-serving western methods of understanding the world.

On Practicing Critical Race Pedagogy with Corazon/Heart

In answering Acuña’s aforementioned challenge to critically explore the history and pedagogy of Ethnic Studies, I provide theoretical reflections of my pedagogical practice in the field in order to hold myself accountable and push the boundaries of my teaching. I share and reflect upon my use of *testimonio*, autoethnography and autohistoria, the family “telling case,” and experience-based activities. Furthermore, I teach from the *corazon/heart/love* by centering the lived-experience of students in my work to humanize learning through dialogue and course assignments that honor connection to community as opposed to alienation. Teaching in this way allows me to also teach from a place of hope. A hope very much like the version bell hooks describes in stating, “My hope emerges from those places of struggle where I witness individuals positively transforming their lives and the world around them” (Preface, xiv).

Yet, to teach from a place of healing, love, hope, *corazon/heart* comes with many challenges. For many Students of Color alienation in educational institutions can become the physical and “emotional prison.”¹² Because the constant repression of their history, identities and communities, Students of Color may find it difficult to experience *corazon/heart* in the classroom when present. The reality of the structural oppression, therefore, requires me to push myself as a Critical Race theorist and pedagogue.

As a Chicana feminist guided by Freirean theory, I teach from the *corazon/heart* in order to promote learning through healing and healing through learning. My responsibility is to continue to provide spaces where students can learn and grow in order to help them illuminate the multiple layers of oppression they face daily in the academy. Most importantly, in order to reach this goal I must continue exhibiting and role modeling vulnerability and truth in the classroom, and share my own story of healing in order to garner the same from my students.

Appendices

Appendix A: Theories and Methods Course

Course Description: This course takes a critical, in-depth theoretical exploration of how Chicanas and Chicanos experience interlocking systems of power and oppression based on race, class, gender and sexuality. Students will theorize how Chicana/o identity formations are influenced by socio-historical and contemporary processes of colonization and resistance. Through in-depth analysis and deconstruction of texts, online discussions, film critique and

¹¹ See Moraga & Anzaldúa, “This Bridge Called My Back” (23)

¹² Anzaldúa, “*Conocimiento*.”

dialogue, students examine the production of group inequality and power via legal, economic, educational, and structures/institutions of higher learning. The goal is for students to critically question ways in which Chicana/o individuals and groups experience, negotiate, transform and resist social inequalities from a local, national/US, and global perspective in order to arrive to theoretical and critical insights on collective and individual strategies for creating a more just, democratic and equitable society. The course will serve to provide an intellectual space through the use of media and technology for autoethnographic, autohistoric, testimonio process of theorizing.

Required Course Texts:

1. Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum. 1970. Print.
2. Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Expanded edition. Beacon Press, Massachusetts, 1991/1965. Print.
3. Perez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into history*. Indiana Press: Bloomington, Indiana. 1999. Print.
4. Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. New York: Zed Books Ltd. 2002. Print.

Other texts on theoretical concepts including Chicana Feminist Epistemologies, Critical Race Theory and Testimonio in research will be provided electronically.

Appendix B: The Family “Telling Case” Assignment

Family Educational History

Each student is responsible for an 8-page Family “Telling Case” paper. The paper consists of auto-ethnographic oral history interviews, family observations and analysis of family historical documents/archives. Students are asked to trace their family’s educational trajectory/history and experiences. The paper must be personal as well as analytical and academic. It will require that students interview one to two key member/s of their family. In addition students are encouraged to find and identify historical educational documents, pictures, report cards, etc. that historicize the family’s educational trajectory. Analysis, reflection and discussion must focus on the intersection between the student and their family’s educational experience, be it formal or informal schooling that took place in the home or community and the broader issues and themes covered in the course readings and lectures.

Appendix C: Experience-Based Activity and Dialogue

Exploration of My Multiple Identities

- This experiential forced choice exercise asks students to consider their race and gender identit(ies) and how these aspects of their identities are challenged, reaffirmed or made invisible based on one’s relationships at home, work, school, leadership roles, and friendship circles.

- In the activity, signs will be placed around the walls of the room designating: Home, Work, Education, Leadership, Friends and Neighborhood

- Participants begin by standing at the center of the room with the signs surrounding them.

- They then listen to statements and answer based only on the provided choices/signs based on their gender and racial identities. They will be asked to select the sign that best answers the statement related to their personal experiences and to physically walk toward and stand next to or under the sign in affirmation of their answer. They may not stay at the center of the room as an answer to any statement. This is a silent/forced choice exercise. Students MUST make a choice even if they identify with more than one answer.

Note: Ask students to come to the center of the room between each statement.

Activity Prompts:

(Please go to the sign that best exemplifies your feelings.)

1. I feel the most comfortable about my gender identity in this part of my life..

(Facilitator ask students to reflect in silence): When thinking about this aspect of your life, how would your thoughts and feelings shift if you also had to consider your citizenship and/or immigration status?

2. My racial identity is more central to me in this aspect of my life.

Reflection Question: Reflect upon and consider why your racial identity is more prominent in this part of your life?

Reflection Question: How does your age impact your racial identity?

3. I feel challenged more often in this part of my daily life because of my gender & racial identity.

Reflection Question: What does being challenged because of your gender as a member of your racial group look like in this context?

4. My gender identity is not central in this aspect of my life.

Reflection Question: What is it about this context that allows you to not focus on your gender identity?

5. I feel free to express my gender identity as a member of my racial group in this space.

Reflection Question: What are the systems of support present in this space that make it more open for you to express your gender & racial identity?

6. My gender identity as a member of my racial group is important to me in this part of my life on a daily basis.

Dialogue Debrief in Community (preferably in a circle setting):

Dialogue questions:

- 1) What did you learn about yourself as a member of your gender and racial group?
- 2) As you were answering the statements for yourself in regards to the daily spaces you inhabit, what ideas about your multiple identities emerge?
- 3) Why do you think it is important to explore these identity questions?
- 4) Can you provide an example from the reading that speaks to your feelings or thoughts during the experience activity?

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