

LatIndia II — Latinas/os, Natives, and *Mestizajes* — A LatCrit Navigation of *Nuevos Mundos, Nuevas Fronteras, and Nuevas Teorias*¹

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*Sangre llama a sangre.*²

You don't pick your tribe; the tribe picks you.³

Some villages did not survive.⁴

PREFACE: IN SEARCH OF LATCRIT PRAXIS

This Essay is a journey that will elucidate a personal exploration of LatCrit's trinitarian goals of engagement of identity interrogations, community building, and self-critical analysis. It will reflect personal travels and travails, bumps in the road and epiphanies, theory and practice. The plot for these musings is a cultural voy-

¹ Author's translation: New Worlds, New Borderlands/Frontiers, New Theories.

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² Jeanette Rodriguez, *Sangre Llama a Sangre, Cultural Memory as a Source of Theological Insight*, in HISPANIC/LATINO THEOLOGY, CHALLENGE AND PROMISE 117, 117-18 (Ada María Isasi-Díaz & Fernando F. Segovia eds., 1996). I thank Guadalupe Luna for this reference, which she translates as *blood cries out to blood*. As Professor Luna has noted, the expression "connotes something in the blood that allows one to access the affective, 'intuitive level.'" Guadalupe Luna, *Gold, Souls, and Wandering Clerics: California Missions, Native Californians, and LatCrit Theory*, 33 U.C. DAVIS L. REV. 921 (2000). My turn of this phrase involves the callings experienced both in our search for our identities — what Paula Gunn Allen has called knowing our mothers and our LatCritical goals of creating and practicing community and building coalitions. See PAULA GUNN ALLEN, THE SACRED HOOP 209 (1986).

³ Christine Zuni, Remarks at LatCrit IV Circle: On Mestizaje and Contemporary Latina/o Identities: Current Problems in Denying, Reclaiming, and Overclaiming Mestiza/o Identity (Apr. 30, 1999) (on file with author).

⁴ Jo Carrillo, Remarks at LatCrit IV Circle: On Mestizaje and Contemporary Latina/o Identities: Current Problems in Denying, Reclaiming and Overclaiming Mestiza/o Identity (Apr. 30, 1999) (on file with author).

age in which this *viajera* embarks to live and comprehend the meaning of *mestizaje*⁵ in a personal quest for identity location; the stage is LatCrit IV.

My interrelated trips are chartered in three parts. Part I, *Nuevos Mundos*: Traveling LatCrit Community, presents the historical background of, contexts for, and evolutions of personal identity explorations in which I have engaged in the past utilizing the vehicle of LatCrit. As will become evident, that vehicle is a complex and changing one. But at its core, LatCrit philosophizes inclusiveness in light of diversity, support in light of difference, community in light of conflict. These foundational elements imbue the personal, political, and academic/intellectual aspects of the LatCrit movement. As my observations and experiences reveal, such an environment absorbs the shocks of stresses and conflicts and transmogrifies potentially disruptive energy into transformation and growth.

Part II, *Nuevas Fronteras*: LatCrit IV Crossings, relates my personal journey through our fourth LatCrit encounter. In so doing, it illuminates, by re/presenting a lived experience, several locations of stress points among our communities. Specifically, this Part, largely a narrative of my presentation at LatCrit, my participation in the "circle," and the events surrounding those two experiences, unearths possible tensions in the interrogation of identities and in claims to *mestizaje* as well as the potential conflicts such interrogation may engender.

⁵ See generally GLORIA ANZALDÚA, *BORDERLANDS/LA FRONTERA: THE NEW MESTIZA* (1987) (noting that *mestiza* refers to woman whose identity is product of at least two cultures); see also Margaret E. Montoya, *Máscaras, Trenzas, y Greñas: Un/Masking the Self While Un/Braiding Latina Stories and Legal Discourse*, 17 HARV. WOMEN'S L.J. 185, 217 & n.114 (1994). In explaining the value of the word *mestiza/o*, Professor Montoya provided:

When we attempt to understand the full range of connotations of our racial terminologies, we are forced to reexamine the unconscious linguistic roots of racial prejudice and to face the fact that language predetermines perception. This is why a word like *metis* or *mestizo* is most useful: it derives etymologically from the Latin *mixtus*, "mixed," and its primary meaning refers to cloth made of two different fibers, usually cotton for the warp and flax for the woof: it is a neutral term, with no animal or sexual implication. It is not grounded in biological misnomers and has no moral judgments attached to it. It evacuates all connotation of "pedigreed" ascendance, unlike words like octoroon or half-breed.

Id.

The last section, Part III, *Navegando Nuevas Teorías* (Traveling/Navigating New Theories) seeks to unravel the discord that surfaced as this Essay exposes in Part II. It seeks to unbundle the positive and transformative potential of tension and strife. This exploration does not deny, indeed it recognizes and accepts, the existence of stress, and, suggests how, by utilizing its force and re-directing it towards constructive projects, it can move us towards accomplishing the LatCrit goals of producing knowledge, connecting communities, and building coalition.

I. NUEVOS MUNDOS: TRAVELING LATCRIT COMMUNITY

This *viaje's* (travel's) map is not wholly uncharted. Rather it has various significant signposts discovered and documented in earlier journeys that commenced even before I understood the concept of world traveling. Some of them, the gateway for which is the *cultura latina*, date to my early childhood; others have emerged from the cultural differences experienced within the United States borderlands.

The first signpost is the location that marks the realization of otherness within the *comunidad Latina* by virtue of women's second class citizenship because of their sex.⁶ The "otherness," which persists within me today, resulted from being a girl growing up in Puerto Rico, a machista society where women are supposed to be deferential to, sacrifice for, and serve all the men in their lives — from fathers to husbands to younger brothers. I would later learn that the "heteropatriarchy"⁷ that drove this hierarchy was embedded in the majority culture within the *estados unidos* as well.⁸

⁶ See Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)Gendered: Normativities, Latinas, and a LatCrit Paradigm*, 72 N.Y.U. L. REV. 882, 912 (1997) [hereinafter Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)Gendered*] (discussing second class role of women in society); Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol, *Building Bridges III — Personal Narratives, Incoherent Paradigms, and Plural Citizens*, 19 CHICANO-LATINO L. REV. 303, 314 (1998) [hereinafter Hernández-Truyol, *Building Bridges III*] (describing gender role in Latino culture); Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol, *Indivisible Identities: Culture Clashes, Confused Constructs, and Reality Checks*, 2 HARV. LATINO L. REV. 199, 210-11 (1997) [hereinafter Hernández-Truyol, *Indivisible Identities*] (describing experience as Latina).

⁷ See Francisco Valdes, *Unpacking Hetero-Patriarchy: Tracing the Conflations of Sex, Gender & Sexual Orientation to Its Origins*, 8 YALE J.L. & HUMAN. 161, 207 (1996) (arguing that current Euro-American system is heteropatriarchal).

⁸ See Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)Gendered*, *supra* note 6, at 912-14 (noting parallelism of "woman-as-the-second-sex" norms in majority culture and *cultura Latina*).

Another signpost marks my early recognition and embrace of the pan-ethnicity and heterogeneity of this *comunidad Latina*⁹ notwithstanding majority society's conflation of these deliciously complex and diverse peoples into a monolithic category. We have some shared histories of ancestry, common language(s), similar foods, strong ties to *familia*, and the dislocating experiences of colonization and migrations, although the specific patterns in all of these categories vary greatly.¹⁰ My realization of the *comunidad Latina's* diversity and similarities continue to inform and direct my travels.

A third signpost designates a later epiphany — one that resulted from the travels that located me for the first time within the *fronteras estado unidenses*. This new geographical setting commenced my educational voyage through the muddy marshes of racial paradigms within the *estados unidos de américa* — paradigms that are greatly divergent from those of and, therefore, are little understood by, persons in the *cultura Latina*.¹¹ There is no doubt that this startling realization continues to map the course of my current and continuing journeys.

These knowledges informed my understanding of otherness, in a much different way than knowledge about my own community as my early realizations about my otherness based on sex had. These new understandings occurred in the context of a majority community the dominance of which resulted in its master narrative¹² defining the boundaries, contents, and context of normativity.¹³ I

⁹ See Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol, *Building Bridges — Latinas and Latinos at the Crossroads: Realities, Rhetoric, and Replacement*, 25 COLUM. HUM. RTS. L. REV. 369, 383-96 (1994) (presenting diversity within *comunidad Latina*).

¹⁰ See *id.* (discussing varied demographics and migration patterns in *comunidad Latina*).

¹¹ See Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)Gendered*, *supra* note 6, at 897-902 (discussing different racial paradigms for *comunidad Latina* and majority culture within United States and noting how those differences are confusing).

¹² See Lisa C. Ikemoto, *Traces of the Master Narrative in the Story of African American Korean American Conflict: How We Constructed "Los Angeles,"* in CRITICAL RACE THEORY: THE CUTTING EDGE 305, 305 (Richard Delgado ed., 1995) [hereinafter CRITICAL RACE THEORY]; Audre Lorde, *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*, in THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK 98, 99 (Cherríe Moraga & Gloria Anzaldúa eds., 1981).

¹³ See Jerome McCristal Culp, Jr., *Autobiography and Legal Scholarship and Teaching Finding the Me in the Legal Academy*, 77 VA. L. REV. 539, 546-47 (1991) (noting that failure of outsiders to present personal experiences reinforces majoritarian perspective); Richard Delgado, *Legal Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative*, in CRITICAL RACE THEORY, *supra* note 12, at 64 (describing "stories . . . told by the ingroup . . . [that] provide it with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural"); Richard Delgado, *Norms and Normal Science: Toward a Critique of Normativity in Legal Thought*, 139 U. PA. L. REV. 933, 937-59 (1991) (critiquing dominant school of normative jurisprudence); Richard Delgado, *Shadowboxing: An Essay on Power*, 77 CORNELL L. REV. 813, 814-19 (1992)

learned that in this country ethnicity,¹⁴ nationality,¹⁵ and even religion¹⁶ are racialized for purposes, and with the effect, of othering. The roadmap of these borderlands designated me an “other” simply because I am Latina — although all my life that has been *my* normativity.

The fourth signpost is one that is under construction, and this Essay is part of the work of drafting its mapping. Recently, I encountered a disarming interrogation of identity — one that goes to the heart of my passionate and conscious identification as a Latina within these borderlands. This challenge can be traced to the Lat-Crit II meeting in San Antonio, Texas in which scholar and activist Luz Guerra questioned how we could embrace the term Latina/o without a serious interrogation of its colonialist underpinnings. She emphasized that to address the histories of the indigenous peoples of this hemisphere within a “Latino[/a] context . . . with-

(discussing dominant culture preference for “objective” norms because they are of benefit to empowered as they define meaning of rules); Linda S. Greene, *Multiculturalism as Metaphor*, 41 DEPAUL L. REV. 1173, 1175-78 (1992) (arguing that Supreme Court’s “normative vacuum” results in failure to enforce equality and inclusion); Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)Gendered*, *supra* note 6, at 901-02 (noting that because knowledge is socially constructed, normative paradigm’s dominance creates definition of normal, including identity characteristics and knowledge base); Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Columbus’s Legacy: Law as an Instrument of Racial Discrimination Against Indigenous Peoples’ Rights of Self-Determination*, 8 ARIZ. J. INT’L & COMP. L. 51, 67-68 (1991) (observing that Supreme Court jurisprudence dealing with American Indians comes from medieval European tradition and law of colonization brought by Columbus and seeks to legitimate cultural racism).

¹⁴ See generally Hernández-Truyol, *Borders (En)Gendered*, *supra* note 6, at 904 (arguing that dominating group translates race into “other”); Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol, *The LatIndia and Mestizajes: Of Cultures, Conquests, and LatCritical Feminism*, 3 IOWA J. GENDER, RACE & JUSTICE 63 (1999) [hereinafter *LatIndia I*].

¹⁵ See *Immigration from Countries of the Western Hemisphere, 1928: Hearings on H.R. 6465, H.R. 7358, H.R. 10955, H.R. 11687 Before the House Comm. on Immigration and Naturalization*, 70th Cong. 28 (1928) (statement of Rep. Box of Texas) (referring to Mexicans as “little brown peon[s]” who are members of different race), *cited in* Gary A. Greenfield & Don B. Kates, *Mexican Americans, Racial Discrimination and the Civil Rights Act of 1866*, 63 CAL. L. REV. 662, 698 (1975). Courts’ references to other nationality/national origin categories as racial categories — the Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Mexican races, for example — confirm their conflated view of race and ethnicity/national origin. See *Hernandez v. Texas*, 347 U.S. 475, 479 (1954) (observing confusion with respect to different classifications of race, ethnicity, and national origin and concluding that petitioner met burden of proof for group discrimination claim by establishing that persons of Mexican descent were separate class from “whites”).

¹⁶ See *Shaare Tefila Congregation v. Cobb*, 481 U.S. 615, 617-18 (1987) (concluding that “Jews and Arabs were among the peoples then considered to be distinct races” and protected by § 1981); *St. Francis College v. Al-Khazraji*, 481 U.S. 604, 613 (1987) (finding that § 1981 protects against racial discrimination, which includes “identifiable classes of persons who are subjected to intentional discrimination solely because of their ancestry or ethnic characteristics”).

out having critically examined the term Latino[/a] and its relationship to Native history is impossible."¹⁷

Her exhortation caught me completely off guard. Amazingly, I had done just that in my early decision to embrace the term Latina. To be sure, much deliberation went into my decision on naming, a process I believe is critical in finding out who we are, our location in life, and our place in the scheme of things.¹⁸ But my considerations, I realize, were underinclusively limited to the location of the Latina/o vis à vis the majority forces within the *estados unidos*.

In those first stages of interrogation, I rejected the term "Hispanic" as an ethnic label that was imposed by the master. That term is the "product of a decision by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1978 to operationalize the labels as '[a] person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race'."¹⁹

Rather than embrace "colonization by naming," I selected the Latina appellation,²⁰ in large part because of its decolonizing effect

¹⁷ Luz Guerra, *LatCrit y La Des-Colonización Nuestra: Taking Colón Out*, 19 CHICANO-LATINO L. REV. 351, 351-52 (1998).

¹⁸ See ALLEN, *supra* note 2, at 209 (discussing importance of naming your own mother to enable other "people to place you precisely within the universal web of your life").

¹⁹ GERARDO MARÍN & BARBARA VAN OSS MARÍN, RESEARCH WITH HISPANIC POPULATIONS 20 (Applied Social Research Methods Series No. 23, 1991) (citation omitted).

²⁰ See Hernández-Truyol, *supra* note 9, at 370 & n.2. As is widely known, there is ongoing discourse within the Latina/o community regarding what the appropriate appellation is — the Latina/o versus Hispanic debate. As a Latina I feel comfortable with that term as it is me — a woman who is a member of a particular ethnic group — all in one word. The term Latino, currently the preferred label for the group, presents a problem to me because it is not gender-neutral. The term Hispanic is troubling because it is a label imposed on the group by outsiders rather than a self-selected name. The use of the gendered "Latino" would reinforce the notions of normativity that this Essay rejects; using a gender-neutral term like Hispanic is not consonant with my goal to urge a replacement of existing false assumptions of normativity imposed linguistically by the group in power. This author's view is that Latinas/os will struggle for a while in the course of appropriating the power to decide what the "right" name ought to be. In any event, a label ought to be flexible and able to adapt to shifting socio/economic/legal/historical concerns, e.g., negro to black to African-American. So, at the outset, I confess that for purposes of inclusion I will use the term Latina/o. I apologize to the readers because I realize this term is cumbersome. Notably, there is a large selection of literature on the naming issue, e.g., the Hispanic vs. Latina/o debate. See, e.g., MARIN & MARIN, *supra* note 19, at 20; David E. Hayes-Bautista, *Identifying "Hispanic" Populations: The Influence of Research Methodology Upon Public Policy*, 70 AM. J. PUB. HEALTH 353, 355 (1980) (finding term Hispanic is misleading and stereotypical); Alfred Yankauer, *Hispanic/Latino — What's in a Name?*, 77 AM. J. PUB. HEALTH 15, 15 (1987) (explaining that prejudice and discrimination cause term "Hispanic" to apply to diverse groups of immigrants); *The Politics of Ethnic Construction: Hispanic, Chicano, Latino?*, LATIN AM. PERSP., Fall 1992, at 1 (giving comprehensive analysis and critique of various labels); see also

— the rejection of the master’s naming — as well as its inclusiveness — racial and national. In adopting that term, however, I identified and rejected the potential for gender subordination because of the then-common use of masculine Latino as universal. Because I also aspire to gender inclusiveness, I have insisted on the use of the term Latina/o in spite of its cumbersomeness. After all those linguistic acrobatics, I feel comfortable with Latina as it re/presents me — a woman who is a member of a particular ethnic group — all in one word.

Significantly, in my sociocultural explorations I have been aware of, and sensitive to, Latinas/os with native roots. Indeed, even before Guerra’s admonition, I had commented on the University of Florida’s recently adopted ethnic/racial classification of Hispanic/Black and Hispanic/White.²¹ On the one hand, the adopted classifications recognize some of the racial diversity among Latinas/os. On the other hand, as neither category reflects or recognizes native heritage the classifications wholly render invisible and consequently “others” those in the *comunidad Latina* with indigenous roots.

Notwithstanding these conscious observations about our native roots, the *conquista* and the identity of *latinidad* were two dots I had failed to connect. Only with Luz Guerra’s challenge did I realize that I fell into the trap that she has so poignantly articulated:

We have been indoctrinated into adopting the old imperialist ways of conquering and dominating, adopting a way of confrontation based on differences while standing on the ground of ethnic superiority. . . . External oppression is paralleled with our internalization of that oppression. They have us doing to those within our own ranks what they have done and continue to do to us — *Otherring* people. . . . The internalization of negative images of

Manuel del Valle, *National Origin and Alienage Discrimination*, in EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION LAW AND LITIGATION 29-31 (Merrick T. Rossein ed., 1993).

As part of this naming process, I also confronted what to call the “majority” group. “White” is inaccurate as it, again, a term that excludes, e.g., Latinas/os. “Anglos” I find inaccurate as gendered and underinclusive — it was not only the English (and those of English descent) that colonized, settled, and became the “insider” group in this country; that group also included the French, German, and Dutch, just to name a few. So I use the term non-Latina/o white (NLW) to refer to the so-called normative/majority group.

²¹ See Email from Pedro Malavet, Professor, University of Florida, to the author (Sept. 18, 1997) (on file with author).

ourselves, our self-hatred, poor self-esteem, makes our own people the *Other*.²²

Anzaldúa's eloquent analysis has made me rethink the naming. Since her original challenge, I have journeyed in search for knowledges about the native origins of Latinas/os, specifically the native origins of *cubanas/os*, and more particularly my own native roots.²³ In those travels I learned much about conquests and silences. Those explorations and my acquired knowledge led me to coin the term LatIndia — a combination of *Latina* and *India* — as one that can embrace both *latinidad* and native roots. I felt a sense of accomplishment, a praxis, of having practiced LatCrit theory.

Yet the peace I found in that voyage was short-lived. The disruption of the intellectual tranquility in having practiced what I preached came without notice during LatCrit IV. I will share these discomfitures in the following Part, which represents another stage in the construction of the fourth signpost.

II. NUEVAS FRONTERAS: LATCRIT IV CROSSINGS

In this Part, I will elucidate what I mean about the discomforts, both personal and intellectual, that I experienced at LatCrit IV. This is not easy to write, to remember, to relive. But it is through disquiet that we learn. It is by being thrown off balance that we seek to reconstitute our foundation so as to find equilibrium, temporary as it may be, and in that search for groundedness we must interrogate our fabric, our footing, our groundwork, indeed our roots.

This Part, comprised of a partial voyage of LatCrit IV through my lens, my memory, my feelings, is part of the process of mapping the fourth signpost. This version, by necessity, is the story as viewed by me, with all of my indivisible and interdependent identities informing my *cuentos* (stories): the lawyer, the *hija* (daughter), the *hermana* (sister), the alien, the *profe de derecho* (law professor), the *amiga* (friend), the lover, the writer, the *mujer* (woman), the *nacida en cuba* (Cuban born) exile, *criada en puerto rico* (raised in Puerto Rico) *cubarriqueña* — a Latina in the *estados unidos*, the outsider, the *normativa*, the *LatIndia*, the “other.” I am the amalgamation of

²² Gloria Anzaldúa, *Recognizing, Accepting, and Celebrating Our Differences*, in MAKING FACE, MAKING SOUL/HACIENDO CARAS 142, 143 (Gloria Anzaldúa ed., 1990).

²³ See *infra* Part III (providing account of travels); see generally *LatIndia I*, *supra* note 14.

those tongues, experiences, knowledges, geographies, is that time, and space. Those are my *mundos*, the worlds I journey every day, variably exposing race, color, ethnicity, gender, nationality, culture, sexuality, and language *fronteras* — *fronteras* that constitute the daily navigations I call life.

With the interdependent and interrelated goals of LatCrit in mind — “the production of knowledge,” “the advancement of transformation,” “the expansion and connection of struggle(s),” and “the cultivation of community and coalition”²⁴ — I will remember and relate the story about the *nuevas fronteras* I discovered, *nuevos viajes* I embarked upon, y *nuevos mundos* I encountered in LatCrit IV.

* * * * *

My LatCrit IV journey commenced in Madison, Wisconsin, where I was spending my research leave during the spring of 1999. Even though I had to wake up at the crack of dawn to catch a plane to Reno and then a couple of shuttles to the Sierra Conference Center in Tahoe, I was brimming with excitement. Given my recent explorations into identity, the theme of the conference, *Rotating Centers, Expanding Frontiers: LatCrit Theory and Marginal Intersections*, was particularly alluring. As I have shared with friends, if there were only one conference a year that I could attend, LatCrit would be it. I love its diversity, am energized by it. So at 6:00 a.m. in the cab on the way to the airport I started imagining the lively conversations, provocative exchanges, and intellectual feast that I was about to inhabit. I had spoken nothing but English for months, except when *mami y papi* would call. In anticipation I was savoring the different Spanish *acentos* I was about to celebrate, the incredible stories I was going to hear, the good *traguitos*, *vino*, and food that we would share.

Of course, the first part of my journey is somewhat blurred; nothing works very well for me before noon. So in the first part of the flight, from Madison to Minneapolis, the 6:50 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. leg, I dozed off, expecting that I should save up as much sleep as I could to be prepared for the late nights that have become part of our emerging LatCrit customs.

²⁴ Francisco Valdes, *Foreword: Under Construction: LatCrit Consciousness, Community, and Theory*, 85 CAL. L. REV. 1087, 1093-94 (1997), 10 LA RAZA L.J. 1, 6-8 (1998) (describing four functions of LatCrit).

There was an hour and a half wait in Minneapolis, a layover that I was dreading as I was ready to get on with the business of visiting with and learning from old colleagues and friends as well as meeting new and exciting scholars. But my first fabulous *sorpresa* arrived during the layover. I ran into Guadalupe Luna, whom I had not seen since our last *reunión* and we soon went off to get a *café con leche* — well, at least the airport's attempt at it — and sat down to *chismear*.²⁵ During this catch-up session I was delighted to learn that we were on the same flight to Reno — we had plenty of time to chat. And we used the time wonderfully.

We carried our *cafecitos* on to the plane and, because it was not full, we managed to sit in aisle seats across from each other. Although we were both intent on working — reading the pieces we were to comment on during the conference — our attention spans were, at best, minuscule. We'd read a page and visit. We'd share parts of the different papers with each other and help craft useful comments for the authors. Aaaaah, I thought to myself while still *en el avión*, this is academic life as it should be lived: not even at the conference yet and already sharing stories, work, and play.

Needless to say the flight seemed much shorter than I had anticipated because throughout the trip Guadalupe and I engaged in interesting conversations and friendly banter. I must say, it was comforting to start traveling between *inglés* and *español* in *trabajo* and *chisme*. I should also note that we got more than our fair share of nasty looks and scornful sighs as we moved between our worlds of language.

Al fin we arrived in Reno, where, just walking off the plane we started running into friends. The first group upon which we came — and it is we because Guadalupe and I were now traveling *juntas* — was a crew from Miami: Frank, Lisa, Nancy, and this huge entourage, which included among others, Nick, who made a presentation during one of the plenaries that I am sure will be transformative. But now I am getting ahead of myself.

The Miami bunch had rented a car. Guadalupe and I were going to take a shuttle. After collecting her bags, we realized that the shuttle would not leave for an hour so we sniffed out a place to eat where we continued our visit over *tragos* (drinks) and lunch. By the

²⁵ A literal translation of the word *chisme* would be “gossip” but that is not accurate. *Chisme* is a positive, light exchange. A more accurate translation of the meaning would be “catch up” which is what we did.

time we needed to go to the shuttle, we ran into Pedro Malavet, who had rented a car and, in LatCrit spirit, offered us a ride. So off we went to explore the road to Tahoe.

The ride in the mountains made me nostalgic for *nuevo mexico*, that land of enchantment where I had once lived. The warmth of the Southwest surrounded me.

While Pedro negotiated the winding roads, we continued catching up. Now Pedro shared with us his need to get to Tahoe early — he had been on the organizing committee for the conference and had to make sure things were progressing smoothly. We made sure we stopped before we arrived at the conference center so that we could buy some *vino tinto* to keep *en el cuarto* — *una copita o dos* (a glass or two) is the perfect end to an exciting and exhausting day. It was good we did not break the bottles open right away though; the road up to the lodge was quite an adventure — small, narrow, eroded by the snow — treacherous by any standard. But we laughed. Pedro and I reminisced about the similar narrow, winding mountain roads in Puerto Rico — roads adorned with crucifixes indicating locations of deadly accidents.

When we arrived at the conference center we joined others; we were all chortling or mumbling about the incredibly awful ride. But the grumblings were in community. Interspersed with the commentaries were the hugs and kisses hello, the warm greetings of friends who have not seen each other for some time and are happy to meet again.

The reunion progressed as was now habitual. Lively conversations warmed every corner of the rooms, the nature paths, the hallways. After the opening panel — a moderated focus group discussion on *Reclaiming Equal Opportunity for Latinas/os, and Others in Legal Education* — we retreated to watch the Danzantes Aztecas, an impressive performance group that showed our *mestizaje* — crossing boundaries of race, sex, ethnicities, languages, and religions. Dinner and more conversations followed, with the usual late night visits over *traguitos* at Frank's room.

The next day, as every day, was packed. However, it was the day when I was “on” — the day for my presentation on the panel named *Native Cultures, Comparative Values and Critical Intersections* — a panel that, in my expectations, would expand the considerations

of nonessentialism,²⁶ the intersectionalities, multidimensionalities, and interconnectivities²⁷ — the hybridities²⁸ we had been considering in LatCrit discourse since its beginnings — focusing on native identities and heritages.

I was particularly apprehensive about this talk not only because it chartered a new course in my identity journey, but also because I was at a presentation with two people who are very special to me. One, Jo Carrillo, who was the chair of the panel, had been my student the first year I taught at New Mexico. With her incredible scholarship and generous intellect, however, I see Jo as my friend and teacher rather than as a former student. The other is one of my oldest academic friends, Eric Yamamoto, whose continuous and

²⁶ The concept of essentialism suggests that there is one legitimate, genuine universal voice that speaks for all members of a group, thus assuming a monolithic experience for all within the particular group — be it women, blacks, Latinas/os, Asians, etc. Feminists of color have been at the forefront of rejecting essentialist approaches because they effect erasures of the multidimensional nature of identities and also collapse multiple differences into a singular homogenized experience. See Angela P. Harris, *Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory*, in *CRITICAL RACE FEMINISM — A READER* 11, 11 (Adrien Katherine Wing, ed., 1997) (hereinafter *READER*) (stating that “‘We the People’ seems in danger of being replaced by ‘We the Women’ . . . [a]nd in feminist legal theory, as in the dominant culture, it is mostly white, straight, and socio-economically privileged people who claim to speak for all of us”); Celina Romany, *Ain’t I a Feminist*, in *READER*, *supra*, at 19 (noting that “the feminist narrative deployed as a foundation with its monocausal emphasis on gender falls short of the liberation project feminists should be about”).

²⁷ See Elvia R. Arriola, *Gendered Inequality: Lesbians, Gays and Feminist Legal Theory*, 9 *BERKELEY WOMEN’S L.J.* 103, 108 (1994) (urging holistic approach); Kimberlé Crenshaw, *A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Law and Politics*, in *THE POLITICS OF LAW — A PROGRESSIVE CRITIQUE* 356, 364 (David Kairis ed., 3d ed. 1998) (promoting notion of intersectionality); Harris, *supra* note 26, at 13 (proposing anti-essentialist, multiple-consciousness analytical approach); Hernández-Truyol, *supra* note 9, at 433 (advocating analysis that acknowledges multidimensionality); Francisco Valdes, *Sex and Race in Queer Legal Culture: Ruminations on Identities & Inter-Connectivities*, 5 *S. CAL. REV. L. & WOMEN’S STUD.* 25, 47-48 (1995). Professor Valdes defined “interconnection” as:

openness, interactivity, flexibility and adaptability [with] [c]onnectivity thus serv[ing] as the predicate for inter-connection . . . [and] simultaneously signif[ying] what is, as well as what can be; it both denotes capacity — that which is — and delineates potential — that which can be [thereby] . . . the term describes at once both the actual and the possible.

Id.

²⁸ See HOMI K. BHABHA, *THE LOCATION OF CULTURE* 4 (1994) (suggesting that “interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy”); see also Margaret Chon, *Acting upon Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* by Lisa Lowe, 76 *OR. L. REV.* 765, 769 (1997) (“By ‘hybridity,’ I refer to the formation of cultural objects and practices that are produced by the histories of uneven and unsynthetic power relations; for example, the racial and linguistic mixings in the Philippines and among Filipinos in the United States are the material trace of the history of Spanish colonialism.”).

continued support inspire as much affection as his intelligence causes intimidation.

The panel proceeded as planned. I was the third speaker — seated between Jo and Eric I felt both comfort and incredible fear. But the time came for me to speak. Here is the story I told:

In March of 1998 I was scheduled to take the first trip to my birth country since my family had left in 1960. I was traveling to Cuba for a human rights conference. My travel would be in association with Madre, a nongovernmental organization (“NGO”) that focuses on the well being of mothers and children. Madre representatives travel to Cuba to take medicine for the *cubanas/os* who have as dire a shortage as they have a need and school supplies, for children and teachers — items allowable under the almost forty year-old embargo against trade with Cuba that the *estados unidos* has imposed. I was joining the NGO to attend the conference as personal, professional, and recreational travel to Cuba from the *estados unidos* and by *ciudadanas/os estado unidenses* is also prohibited by the embargo.

In January, Madre had collected the necessary information from all of us who were traveling under its auspices so that it could obtain the necessary travel visas from both the United States and Cuba. I had been quite desirous of visiting my birth country for some time, but being Cuban born I wanted to ensure that both countries granted the necessary permission for my being there. Should anything go wrong, I wanted the full weight of my U.S. passport for my protection. This human rights conference presented an ideal opportunity to visit my land.

Mami y papi were as excited about my trip as I was. We talked about family I would visit; friends I would call; photos that I would take — prominent among these were a million or so shots of the home we left behind. In preparation for meeting my family anew, and for the displacement and anxiety I felt as the trip closed in on me — I would be going to my land where I would be an “other” because I left, traveling from my new land where I am an “other” because I came — I asked *mami y papi* to prepare a genealogical tree for me so I could have a sense of the location of my culture, my dangling roots. Bless them, they took the task to heart. I suppose it was even fun and interesting to fill my recently retired *papi*'s time. They called *tías y tíos, primas y primos, amigas y amigos* from both sides of the family to obtain information and fill out the

branches of our existence. They taped piece of paper upon piece of paper so that not one name would be lost or misread. The product was an impressive one indeed.

As direct travel to Cuba was all strictly prohibited at that time (now there are direct charter flights from New York and California, although this is a very recent development) my connections would have to be through either Nassau or Mexico. My plan was to join a group of Madre representatives in Nassau. But as all connections to Nassau went through Miami, where *mami y papi* live, I decided to visit them at home for several days before I traveled to Nassau as the gateway to *mi isla*. This was an exciting development for all of us. We would be able to study the tree together, as well as call family and friends to plan for my arrival. As you can well imagine, my time as a conference participant was diminishing in direct proportion to the number of persons contacted.

My plans were set. I would travel to Miami on Wednesday after I taught my last class, I would stay until Sunday when I would leave for Nassau. I would return through Miami and spend one day with *mami y papi* debriefing. Taking a 9:30 p.m. plane from Kennedy airport on Wednesday, I would land in Miami at midnight just in time for a nightcap with the folks.

Well, as the saying goes, *las personas proponen pero dios dispone* (persons propose but god disposes) — things got terribly messed up. The Monday before I was to leave I received a call from Cuba — something about a problem with my visa. I immediately called Madre. We quickly solved the mystery. For some incomprehensible reason whomever handled the Cuban visa paperwork for the trip forgot to report that I was Cuban born, which entails an entirely different processing of information. It was not a good sign. However, Madre contacted the travel agency, which then went to work with the Cuban government to see if my visa could be timely issued.

Even *mami y papi* got involved in my visa-obtaining project. Some of the necessary information was the name of the hospital in which I was born, my addresses in Cuba, and the precise addresses of anyone in Cuba whom I would visit. I did not know the answers to any of the questions. Fortunately, *mami y papi* bailed me out.

Although the visa issue had not been resolved by the time of my scheduled flight to Miami, I went anyway. The worst that could happen (which did happen, although I did not learn about it until

Saturday) was that I would visit *mami y papi* even if I could not go to Cuba.

After my arrival, *mami, papi*, and I had a late night — *charlando* until the wee hours. But the next morning we got up and went to the Versailles for *café con leche y pastelitos* — my favorite breakfast, and one that is only readily available in Miami. After that we returned *a casa* to get ready for my trip — we had calls to make, and a genealogical tree to study. I was particularly interested in seeing the family tree so I went right to it. I laid out the project on the floor of the family room and carefully studied it. Surprised at first, but getting increasingly agitated, I just had to ask *mami* about my *tatarabuelita* — my great-great grandmother. “*Como se llama?*” (What is her name?) I asked *mami*. I learned nobody knew her name. Her designation on this otherwise plush tree was simply “*la India*.”

At that very instant, I decided I needed to learn more about the nameless, invisible people in my *familia*. My *tío* Miguel, who is the one who does most of the tree-building work, told me that *la India*'s last name was Villalón — the name of the Spaniard who was granted an *encomienda*²⁹ (parcel) that included the right to the Indians who were on that land.³⁰

Because my trip to Cuba never materialized, I was unable to do the research on the *familia* that I intended to do. But that could not keep me from the books, and I learned what I could from the available resources. I learned that *indocubanas/os* were gentle,

²⁹ See S. JAMES ANAYA, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW 10 (1996) (noting that *encomienda* system “granted the Spanish conquerors and colonists parcels of land and the right to the labor of the Indians living on them”); RAMIRO GUERRA, MANUAL DE LA HISTORIA DE CUBA 37 (1975) (describing *encomienda* system); LOUIS A. PÉREZ, JR., CUBA — BETWEEN REFORM AND REVOLUTION 23 (1988) (calling *encomiendas* Indian grants).

³⁰ *Encomienda* labor was not viewed as slavery, but a form of serfdom; slavery of Indians also existed. However, effectively, not much difference existed in the practices. See RONALD SANDERS, LOST TRIBES AND PROMISED LANDS 128-32 (1978) (explaining that grants of *encomienda* consisted of parcels of newly conquered land and right to use labor of indigenous people living on them); 4 LA ENCICLOPEDIA DE CUBA 34 (Vicente Báez ed., 2d ed. 1975) [hereinafter ENCICLOPEDIA] (noting that ill-treatment and enslavement of indigenous population at hands of Spaniards resulted in their extinction); *id.* at 42 (describing capture and sale of Indians); *id.* at 44 (describing punishment of Indians that refused to work as slaves); *id.* at 50 (explaining that serfdom was for gentle Indians and slavery for rebellious ones in early Spanish colonies in Americas); *id.* at 51 (noting that *encomendados* were serfs of the *encomenderos* and stating that justification for enslavement of Indians was their attack of Spaniards); *id.* at 52 (noting that slavery of Indians predated slavery of Africans); 1 LEVI MARRERO, CUBA: ECONOMÍA Y SOCIEDAD 127 (1972).

peaceful peoples³¹ who shared the agricultural lifestyle of their South American ancestors.³² They had a community way of life³³ and did not have the same gender hierarchies and segregations that the *conquistadores* saw as normative.³⁴

The *conquista* decimated the *población indocubana* — it was virtually annihilated or assimilated within three decades of Spanish “discovery,” although documentation exists confirming the existence of some survivors in the second half of the sixteenth century. Estimates reveal that the native population that numbered approximately 112,000 at the time of conquest was reduced to 19,000 by 1519 and that by 1556 there were less than 3000 Indians remaining on the island.³⁵ At the end of the eighteenth century only three identifiable communities of *indocubanas/os* remained in the province of *Oriente*.³⁶

The *indocubanas/os* simply could not survive the different way of life, difficult labor, and assault on their cultural and religious beliefs. *Indocubanas/os* died from the abuse and from the diseases and illnesses the *conquistadores* brought to the “new world.” Various villages committed mass suicide as a form of resistance or simply as a way out.³⁷ Some, like the Cacique Hatuey, presented an active resistance to the death.³⁸

I wanted to recognize this native heritage and honor it. I no longer could have it be invisible, and the naming *LatIndia* was my way of claiming my *mestizaje: Sangre llama a sangre*. My aspirations:

³¹ See ENCICLOPEDIA, *supra* note 30, at 19 (noting that Colón perceived *indocubanas/os* as gentle, timid peoples, who wear no clothes and had no weapons or law).

³² See *id.*; GUERRA, *supra* note 29, at 7; MARRERO, *supra* note 30, at 54-55; PÉREZ, *supra* note 29, at 14-16 (describing history of Ciboney indians).

³³ See GUERRA, *supra* note 29, at 9-11; MARRERO, *supra* note 30, at 51, 57.

³⁴ See ENCICLOPEDIA, *supra* note 30, at 30 (noting that women played important role in society); GUERRA, *supra* note 29, at 13 (noting that in family and in social order women did not occupy position inferior to men).

³⁵ See 2 MARRERO, *supra* note 30, at 352-53 (noting total disappearance of *indocubanos/as* after first decades of Spanish occupation and some documentation of small presence in latter half of sixteenth century); PÉREZ, *supra* note 29, at 30 (“The number of Indians dwindled from an estimated 112,000 on the eve of the conquest to 19,000 in 1519 to 7,000 in 1531. By the mid-1550s, the Indian population had shrunk to fewer than 3,000.”).

³⁶ See 1 MARRERO, *supra* note 30, at ix.

³⁷ See PÉREZ, *supra* note 29, at 28-30 (describing maltreatment of Indians, dispossession of their lands, “overwork, malnutrition, and melancholia,” which weakened population, epidemics of diseases brought by conquerors, and suicide as form of protest); see also ENCICLOPEDIA, *supra* note 30, at 25.

³⁸ See AMALIA BACARDI CAPE, *CRONICAS DE SANTIAGO DE CUBA* 83 (1972); ENCICLOPEDIA, *supra* note 30, at 42-43; GUERRA, *supra* note 29, at 27.

that claiming the LatIndia will help with the goals of producing knowledges, advancing transformation, finding interconnections among communities, and building coalitions.

Notwithstanding these objectives, I recognized some fault-lines. One, I am in the *estados unidos* where the native population has, simultaneously, a similar and different history of *conquista* and struggles. Some of their villages survived; some did not. There are complex issues of sovereignty, citizenship, and freedom about which I know academically but with respect to which I do not have the emotional history of lived oppression. With respect to these I want to interconnect with the native struggle as part of the anti-subordination project. And while, in this regard, I can claim being *LatIndia*, I recognize my separation from the native peoples of the *estados unidos* and respect their struggles, locations, and ideals. I want to build coalition, not appropriate, fetishize, or exoticize my *raizes indigenas*.

Another fault-line is the establishment of a relationship to the native struggles in *américa Latina*. Those, too, are different struggles and histories than mine, of which I am respectful and supportive — another location for interconnection and building community. But in this space, I have to realize that the problem is with the way the conquerors, now identified as Latinas/os, have continued to subordinate the indigenous populations. This causes tension because it is the history of oppression carried out by those with whom I share my *latinidad* that effects subordination. Yet I cannot cease being Latina.

In the end, my hope is that by embracing my native roots, I can obtain knowledges about traditions and histories that will better locate my place in the scheme of things. Embracing my own *mestizaje* is not only literal, but also a metaphor for LatCrit practice and praxis as it has led me down new paths of learning about histories, plaiting their interconnections, changing my own location to encompass previously invisible and silenced parts of the self, all creating the ability to better understand the complex of beings in our world, thus assisting with the architectonic task of building community and coalitions.

* * * * *

That had to be one of the most exhausting and emotionally draining presentations I have ever made. I was relieved when, at the conclusion of the panel and the question and answer period,

both Eric and Jo in their habitual, generous manner, gave me warm hugs and said they had enjoyed the journey with me. That peace was not to last.

We all left the room to take a break and allow time for the redesigning of the chairs for the next project — a circle discussion *On Mestizaje and Contemporary Latina/o Identities: Current Problems in Denying, Reclaiming and Overclaiming Mestiza/o Identity* that I believed would be an illuminating and community-engendering follow-up to the Native Identity panel on which I had just participated. We returned and the discussion started. The paradigm was articulated: you cannot claim a tribe, the tribe has to claim you; tribal existence is inextricably tied to land. I felt dislocated. What do those assertions mean with respect to my giving voice and visibility to my native roots?

My dislocation did not stop there. Later that evening, long after the circle was broken, while having *tragos* at Frank's, the challenge to my work took a direct and aggressive turn. I was accused of romanticizing my *tatarabuella*. The validity and authenticity of my research was simultaneously challenged and dismissed. Who wrote the work on which you rely? Where was it published? Who published it? When was it written? Where was it written? Who are these authors anyway; what are their credentials; what is their training?

I was shaking. For the first time in my life, I cried in English. I was truly distraught. Perhaps LatCrit had outlived its sense of community. Maybe it was time for me to move on. I questioned the very values I had worked so hard to design, develop, and transform. Having recognized my *mestizaje* as something positive, I was now questioning whether I was wrong to have claimed my native heritage. Were the challenges to the authenticity of my identity, not to mention research, valid? Was I (mis)appropriating native roots? Was it not *sangre llamando sangre*? Weren't we all, after all, trying to build interconnections between communities, and was this not a link that could be used to learn and embrace rather than "other" and clash?

I left Tahoe in a fog, the snowy, gray, misty weather of our last day being all too appropriate for and reflective of my *sentimientos*. The trip back to Reno with Celina and Guadalupe reminded me of my love for LatCrit, but did not lift the cloud of confusion enveloping me. Not even the breathtaking landscape could bring me

calm. I was agitated, disjointed, and dazed, and the discomfiture did not end quickly. For months I analyzed and re-analyzed what I experienced, battling with myself as to whether I should give up and move on. Ultimately, I emerged from my daze and confusion, transformed but determined not to lose my way, or be detoured from my journey. I decided to practice the LatCrit that I preach: learn and grow from the experience, use it to strengthen myself and my community, to produce knowledge and advance transformation, to plait interconnections and build coalitions against subordinations. The months of critical self-doubt and self-examination helped to foment a nascent understanding — more questions than answers — as I slowly and cautiously began, again, to construct the fourth signpost. In the next section, I will try to explicate my preliminary understandings.

III. NAVEGANDO NUEVAS TEORÍAS

The assertions made at the circle, the accusations leveled at my work, and my disorientation in the midst of this environment, made me feel that I was living what I had only before imagined when I read Gloria Anzaldúa's words:

Because I, a *mestiza*,
 continually walk out of one culture
 and into another,
 because I am in all cultures at the same time,
alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteada por todas las voces que me hablan
simultáneamente.³⁹

I was *norteada*: was the paradigm set out at the circle universally applicable? What about the numerous cases of villages not surviving? Being completely stripped of and separated from what used to be their land, can those peoples, particularly within the *fronteras estado unidenses* not be Indian? What about other traditions and histories, like the indigenous persons of the Caribbean whose populations were decimated — can we not claim our native heritage? What can one do, what *does* one do, about one's heritage if it

³⁹ ANZALDÚA, *supra* note 5, at 77.

is not appropriate to claim it? Isn't denying the native heritage that then leaves one solely as descending from the *conquistadores* plain and simple racism? Does that denial not result in precisely the obverse of what Luz Guerra exhorted us to do when she urged us to practice *desColonización* — decolonization, taking Colón out so as to identify our own racisms, our investment in colonization and the claims of privilege embodied in the term? Following are my preliminary musings crafted in response to these interrogations.

To be sure, these are not entirely new questions, just cast in a new shade of dye. Margaret Montoya, also in the framework of the very unbalancing but transformative LatCrit II experience asked, in the context of discomfort effected by religious rituals and imagery in the conference space:

What lessons can LatCrits learn from this evolving situation? How are analyses of and responses to color-on-color subordination, e.g., the suppression and marginalization of indigenous peoples by mestizos/mulattos, different from and/or similar to those referring to white-on-color subordination? Do categories of “indigenous” as distinct from “mestizos/mulattos” or “Latinos” or “ladinos” have theoretical integrity? Can LatCrits facilitate coalitions with indigenous peoples in and out of the U.S. (or how does Samuel Ruiz mediate on behalf of the Zapatistas) without compromising their objectives of self-determination and self-expression? Does the hard work of a Bishop Ruiz building schools and health clinics to address the material needs of oppressed communities suggest a LatCrit approach? Don't sociolegal explorations of identity clarify individual and group claims within democratic systems in order to attenuate the interlocking forces of white supremacy, globalized state power and corporate capitalism?⁴⁰

My questions might have resonated those asked before, but never had I experienced such intellectual disorientation, such emotional displacement, such foreignness, such a feeling of being alien and alone. I thought for a long time about what I could do.

⁴⁰ Margaret E. Montoya, *Religious Rituals and LatCrit Theorizing*, 19 CHICANO-LATINO L. REV. 417, 428-29 (1998) (describing issues surrounding transformation of *mestizo* nation-states into multi-ethnic democracies).

After much traveling, I concluded that I would live LatCrit. Here is what that means. It means that I opted for knowledge over ignorance, community over isolation, and coalition over strife. Having reached this stage in building the fourth signpost, I had to figure out how to get off my LatCrit theoretical *derrière* and put theory into practice.⁴¹

That road has been rewarding, though rough. But the value I have derived from my travels more than makes up for the scarred knees. I learned that traveling LatCrit practice to achieve praxis is to undertake a difficult journey. That journey entails unearthing information that can cause tensions in existing paradigmatic traditions because it can unbalance the ostensibly stable existing narratives. It forces us to find new ways of archiving the discoveries and makes us accept that those explorations can have a disruptive or destabilizing effect on existing patterns.

We have to find *nuevas teorías* to locate our different hybridities in the scheme of things. As Margaret Montoya has artfully articulated:

The disruption of hegemonic tranquility, the ambiguity of discursive variability, the cacaphony of polyglot voices, the chaos of radical pluralism, are the desired by-products of transculturation, of mestizaje. The pursuit of mestizaje, with its emphasis on our histories, our ancestries and our past experiences can give us renewed appreciation for who we are as well as a clearer sense of who we can become.⁴²

For example, what does it mean to be *LatIndias/os*? I must confess that I do not know the answer, as this part of my voyage is still under construction. However, some things appear right and those preliminary ideas bring to the fore the coexistence of universalisms — in this case native heritage — with particularities — in this regard the epistemic stance of the individual embracing her/his roots. Much will depend on the individual and his/her personal history. A Hernández raised on a reservation within the *fronteras estado unidenses*, or raised with tribal affiliation within these borderlands has had a tradition and history vastly different from mine. In turn, our respective histories and traditions will differ from the

⁴¹ Thanks to Rob Williams for that turn of a phrase.

⁴² Montoya, *supra* note 5, at 220 (advocating using discursive formats for Latinas to reinvent themselves).

indigenas en américa del sur. Similarly, our Chicana/o brothers and sisters with native roots have experienced a different history altogether. Our struggles — racial, ethnic, gendered, sexual, linguistic — have unfurled in different cultural contexts, and these cultures have molded the plots for our lives.

Yet, we have the struggles in common. We have experienced colonization both within and outside these *fronteras*; we have been subordinated peoples. These commonalities are valuable assets for the production of knowledge, which in turn will better prepare us for the transformations that are prerequisites for liberation. These shared struggles can be a location in which to commence valuable coalitional work and community building.

By engaging each other's histories, cultures, languages, traditions and locations in the scheme of things we will be able to participate in multilingual, multicultural, multiracial discourses within ourselves and between and among our various and varied communities. These many-layered conversations will enable our understanding of each other. Such border crossings will permit us to work within and outside of our cultural, racial, gender, sexuality, ethnic, and religious differences with a goal of strengthening and respecting all the pertinent communities.

Intellectual analysis should reflect our *mestizajes* and be grounded in all of our worlds not only part of them. Rather than seeking to silence and subordinate some peoples and citizenries in favor of the existing hegemonic hierarchical paradigm, we need to join forces across cultural fault lines to fight all subordinations.

If we engage in each other's life plots, we can and will learn from each other's issues, struggles, and successes rather than permit these differences to cause schisms between or among our communities. With a broad harmonious perspective we can seek to globalize solutions, answers, and clarifications in order for the collective interpretations and resolutions crafted, designed, and executed to benefit not only all of our communities within these borders, but global communities that might face similar dilemmas as well.

The allure of LatCrit's particular strand of critical work lies in its foundation of inclusiveness. Issues of race, gender, sexuality, class, nationality, culture, language, and religion have been part of the movement since its inception — albeit with different temporal focus to develop knowledge of the various concerns. Native heritage and identity is one of the many roads we need to navigate with the

purpose of learning how we can integrate valuable native traditions into our lives. The circle experience itself, stressful as it was, presented invaluable lessons. The circle's norms taught me a completely different way of listening, of waiting for my turn to talk — a significant model for anyone who cares about what others think, and wants to learn.

Another priceless lesson that surfaced at the circle was its method of operation. In tribal application the circle continues until consensus is reached, a process that can take hours or days. That and the waiting one's turn can promote harmony and teach patience, a valuable learning in any setting, particularly precious in this adversarial system of laws we inhabit. I am certain that there are many other native traditions that would be of immense value in building community and promoting harmony. Native heritage and traditions, thus, could be transformative and central to building community and coalitions.

I also have discerned, as the story about my traveling LatCrit IV exposes, that each location of culture is a possible fault line. That discovery, unbalancing as it is when experienced, can be the source of the very basis of understanding, forming community, and forging coalition that LatCrit espouses. Unearthing discord, exposing voids in knowledge and understanding, discourse on conflicting, varying, or simply different world views, and living the tension and stress resulting from and accompanying those intellectual and emotional experiences can be used for development of new knowledges, liberation and promotion of the social justice agendas we propound. They offer locations in which to engage in self-critical analysis and to engage in a process⁴³ in which we keep firmly planted holds on all defining aspects of identity and community, in which the sources of knowledge and meaning of identity compo-

⁴³ I have called this process *polilocal hermeneutics*. See Hernández-Truyol, *Building Bridges III*, *supra* note 6, at 310 (articulating notion of polilocal hermeneutics). With this phrase I am varying and borrowing from Boaventura de Sousa Santos, a Portuguese sociologist and human rights activist. See generally Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Toward a Multicultural Conception of Human Rights*, 18.1 ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR RECHTS-SOZIOLOGIE 1 (June 1997). De Sousa Santos suggests that in instances of cross-cultural dialogue, an exchange occurs not only among different knowledges, but also among various cultures, i.e., between different universes of meaning, which consist of strong “topoi” or “overarching rhetorical commonplaces of a given culture.” *Id.* at 8-9. “To understand a given culture from another culture’s topoi,” we need to engage in “diatopical hermeneutics,” a concept “based on the idea that the topoi of an individual culture . . . are as incomplete as the culture itself.” *Id.* at 9. Thus, the objective is “to raise the consciousness of reciprocal incompleteness to its possible maximum by engaging in the dialogue . . . with one foot in one culture and the other in another.” *Id.*

nents/community are “collective, interactive, inter-subjective, and networked.”⁴⁴ These combined approaches allow intellectual and spiritual growth of individuals and communities alike, affording the necessary space for learning, changing, and forging alliances against all of our diverse and varied subordinations.

V. CONCLUSION

This work’s objective and aspiration is that different and diverse persons and communities reading my meditations will be able to engage, analyze, translate and pronounce, in turn and in myriad voices, my hope to form emancipatory cross and multicultural alliances that can and will result in a harmonious and thriving coexistence among us. I am confident my difficult and painful navigation of LatCrit IV in the context of my interrogation of *latinidad* and native origins has identified a location that needs further exploration. To be sure, that fourth signpost remains under construction.

I am also optimistic that my journey can help me, together with other like-minded persons in pursuit of a social justice agenda, design yet another bridge for us to traverse in our search for knowledge, transformation, interconnection, and community. I am confident that by identifying, navigating, and jointly resolving stresses of difference between and among our cultural plots, we can continue harmoniously to grow together as a diverse and inclusive community that will be better poised to implement LatCrit’s antistubordination vision.

⁴⁴ Santos, *supra* note 43, at 12.