

20 Years of

A PUBLICATION OF THE ESPERANZA PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

La Voz de Esperanza

SAN ANTONIO, TEJAS JULY/AUGUST 2009 | VOL. 22 ISSUE 6

Las estamos buscando



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INSIDE
THIS
ISSUE

- **Juarez Femicide updates**
Kin Across the Line
Historic Femicide Trial
- **A Look Back, 20 yrs of La Voz:**
Capitalism vs Communism

- **A Southern Chicana's story:**
¿Como se llaman, ya'll?
- **A Quaker Scientist's Views**
- **Magical Xicana Realism**
- **Mountaintop Removal y mas**

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- * We ask that articles be visionary, progressive, instructive & thoughtful. Submissions must be literate & critical; not sexist, racist, homophobic, violent, or oppressive & may be edited for length.
- * All letters in response to Esperanza activities or articles in La Voz will be considered for publication. Letters with intent to slander individuals or groups will not be published.

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In the last issues of La Voz we began to examine the culture of violence in the U.S. and internationally. In the May issue, two articles brought up the subject of violence. The tragic deaths of a 26 year old African American man along with 4 policemen in Oakland, CA brought that community to question "a system that perpetuates a no win game of them and us, and places a differential value on the worth of each human life." A second article, "Basta, Con La Violencia," called for an end to violence and the development of a new system that prioritizes respect for all human beings, above all.

The June issue of La Voz looked at two murder cases. The killing of Angie Zapata, a transgender woman of color, resulted in a historic verdict marking "the first time the murder of a trans person has been legally designated as a 'hate crime.'" In the 2nd case, Luis Ramírez, an immigrant, was killed "for being out at night while Mexican." The killers, a group of young white men who were high school football stars, were exonerated "from the charges of third degree murder, aggravated assault, reckless endangerment and ethnic intimidation, leaving to stand only the reduced charge of simple assault." The shocking verdict from an all white jury ruled that "there was no evidence of 'ethnic intimidation'" despite testimonies that cited anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican rhetoric. The Ramírez case underscores a trend towards the justification of violence against groups or individuals perceived to be "subhuman" and not worthy of the dominant culture's interpretation of justice.

In this issue of La Voz, we extend the examination of the culture of violence to the femicides in the Juárez/El Paso area of the US/Mexico border that number more than 600 cases with hundreds of young women reported missing in the last fifteen years. The update on the femicides includes the most recent hearings in a world court in Santiago, Chile and the San Antonio connection with a recent conference at the OLLU campus in May, 2009.

In the last 6 months, with the election of the first person of color as President of the U.S., there has been an intensification of the culture of violence as manifested through the lens of xenophobia. Obama's color, religion, feminist leanings and birthright have been targeted by right wing extremists and a sector of mainstream Republicans. Two recent tragedies have vaulted hate crimes onto the national stage. The murder of Dr. George Tiller who was one of only three doctors in the nation providing late term abortions to women, gives us an intimate view of right wing extremists who see Tiller's murder as justifiable homicide. During the entire Bush administration, from 2000-2008, there were no murders of abortion providers. Calls harassing abortion clinics jumped from 396 during the entire Bush administration to 1401 in just the first four months of the Obama administration [see The Murder of Dr. Tiller, A Foreshadowing by Christina Page in The Huffington Post, June 17, 2009]. This suggests that hate and fear have overtaken right wing extremists who appear to be out of control without the comfort of the Republican party or white men in the White House.

In addition, the recent attack on the Jewish Holocaust Museum in June that resulted in the death of an African American security guard gives us deeper insight into these xenophobic minds. The alleged attacker, James W. von Brunn, is a known white supremacist who believes that Obama does what his "Jew owners" tell him to do. He is also one of a sector of people, birthers, who believe Obama was not born in the U.S. Both von Brunn and Scott Roeder, Dr. Tiller's alleged killer, are touted as lone assassins. Yet both have their supporters, especially Roeder who has been hailed as a hero in some anti-abortion sectors. The point of commonality for these men is their perceived entitlement to power now threatened as more and more people of color, queers, women and "others" are integrated into positions of government leadership. And, still, these men have not been looked at as terrorists.

Finally, Rachel Jennings aptly describes the misogynistic process of mountaintop removal in Appalachia, home of yet an "other" type of violence on people. We shall continue to look at the culture of violence in upcoming issues. Share your thoughts and send us your articles to lavoz@esperanzacenter.org — Gloria A. Ramírez, la editora

ATTENTION VOZ READERS: If you have a correction you want to make on your mailing label please send it in to lavoz@esperanzacenter.org. If you do not wish to continue on the mailing list for whatever reason please notify us as well. La Voz is provided as a courtesy to people on the mailing list of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center. **The subscription rate is \$30 per year.** The cost of producing and mailing La Voz has substantially increased and we need your help to keep it afloat. To help, send in your subscriptions, sign up as a monthly donor, or send in a donation to the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center. Thank you. -GAR

VOZ VISION STATEMENT: La Voz de Esperanza speaks for many individual, progressive voices who are gente-based, multi-visioned and milagro-bound. We are diverse survivors of materialism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, classism, violence, earth-damage, speciesism and cultural and political oppression. We are recapturing the powers of alliance, activism and healthy conflict in order to achieve interdependent economic/spiritual healing and fuerza. La Voz is a resource for peace, justice, and human rights, providing a forum for criticism, information, education, humor and other creative works. La Voz provokes bold actions in response to local and global problems, with the knowledge that the many risks we take for the earth, our body, and the dignity of all people will result in profound change for the seven generations to come.

20 Years of La Voz



Editor's note:
As part of *A look back at 20 years of La Voz*, we will reprint articles in the next few months that will give us a sense of how far we've evolved, or not.

a look back

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The Voice Of Peace & Justice In San Antonio

December 1989

CAPITALISM vs. COMMUNISM



...an attempt to clarify the debate

by Gary Poole



Everywhere in the U.S. from political science journals to TV talk shows a consistent, ubiquitous theme can be found: *The Triumph of Capitalism*. Seemingly everyone with access to a magazine or microphone is proclaiming the victory of capitalism in its almost century-long struggle with communism. Even the *San Antonio Light* recently contained an editorial, "What worked in Europe could help Latin America" (11/15/89), parroting this theme and stating that Latin Americans, specifically the FMLN in El Salvador and the FSLN in Nicaragua, should renounce Marxism as an antiquated, failed ideology and instead, look to U.S. capitalism as the dynamic model for Latin America's future.

This is a complex topic; both because of the conceptual nature of the subject--economics, political science, philosophy, sociology--and because of all the emotional, behavior-modified-propaganda baggage North Americans carry around on the subject of communism. Despite this, I will add my observations to this one-sided debate. Space constraints and personal intellectual limitations compel me to make my reply brief (a sigh of relief?).

Historical Considerations: First, it occurs to me that the "Triumph of Capitalism" pep rally strongly displays our lack of historical memory. Barely fifty years ago, capitalism in the U.S. was in a profound state of collapse and was only saved by the welfare state policies of the New Deal and World War II. Also the struggle between capitalism and feudalism, which began in the fourteenth century, lasted hundreds of years. Capitalism suffered many losses at the hands of the aristocracies before it emerged victorious. In our era, we have clearly not allowed enough time to rule definitively on the struggle between capitalism and communism and the next Great Depression may take us once again closer to socialism and further from capitalism.

Capitalism in Latin America: Second, the triumph of capitalism in the 1980's has been a triumph of the few at the expense of the many. With a few exceptions, eg. South Korea, the legacy of capitalism in the Third World has led to a deepening and broadening of impoverishment. The 1980's in Latin America have been labelled the "Lost Decade" to signify that the economic gains made in the 1970s were lost in the ongoing economic crisis

of the 1980s, which continues. With the exceptions of Brazil and Colombia, every Latin American country exhibited a decline in living standards over the decade as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP). Between 1980 and 1987 Chile's standard of living declined by 3%, Mexico's by over 11%, Argentina's by over 15%, and Bolivia's declined by 31.5%. All of these are capitalist economies with smaller state sectors, proportionately, than most of the Western European economies.

Brazil: Brazil is the Latin American country which has performed, arguably, the best during the "Triumph of Capitalism" decade having registered an increase in GDP per capita of 4.2% over 1980-87. But this figure is an aggregate one and hides the real condition of the poor.

Over 43 million Brazilians, 30% of the total population, live in absolute poverty, 67% of Brazilians do not get enough to eat, and 7 million abandoned children beg, steal and try to survive on the streets of Brazilian cities. An estimated 400,000 children died of hunger and malnutrition-related diseases in Brazil in 1988. Fewer children finish primary school than in Ethiopia and fewer are vaccinated than in Tanzania and Botswana. Of course, some Brazilians have done well. Between 1960 and 1980 the wealthiest 10% of the population increased its share of the national income from 19.6% to 50.9% while the share of the national income accruing to the poorest 50% of the population declined from 17.4% to 12.6%. Brazil's marginal capitalistic growth does not bear close scrutiny.

U.S. Capitalism: Clearly, capitalism has not performed well in Latin America from the perspective of the majority of the population. The reason is, at least partly, the same reason that the United States cannot serve as a model of development for the region. Consider U.S. economic history. The reason the U.S. developed as it did was because there existed within the capitalist class at the turn of the century a progressive faction which, under pressure from the labor movement and benefitting from technological advances and cheap raw materials, realized that its profits were constrained by the poverty of America's working class.

(cont'd. next page)

This progressive bourgeoisie allied with labor to redistribute wealth to the industrial proletariat, enabling the workers to buy the products of the capitalists' factories and improve standards of living.

Dysfunctional Capitalism: Now let's consider Guatemala as an example, though the same analysis could be applied to other Latin American countries. In Guatemala the vast majority of the capitalist class derives profits from the sale of agricultural, mineral, or assembled industrial products abroad. These capitalists have no interest in increasing the purchasing power of the Guatemalan working class (i.e. raising wages) because this is not the group of people who purchase the capitalists' products. On the contrary, the logic of capitalism in Guatemala perpetuates *underdevelopment* because the drive for profit compels the capitalist to maintain as great a differential as possible between what he/she pays the workers and what he/she receives for the product abroad.

Therefore, the pattern of capitalist economic development that occurred in the U.S. cannot be duplicated in the Third World because the focus of Third World capitalists is to the *external* rather than the internal market.

Communist Cuba: Despite the poor showing of capitalist Latin America most North Americans would probably guess that conditions in Communist Cuba are far worse. Admittedly, it is much more difficult to buy a Gucci handbag in Cuba or to become a millionaire. However, in terms of social indicators such as life expectancy, infant mortality and illiteracy Cuba ranks ahead of all other capitalist Latin American countries. Life expectancy in Cuba is 74 years while it is 70 years in Argentina, 63 years in Brazil and 59 years in Mexico. Infant mortality in Cuba is 13 deaths per 1000 births but it is 35 in Argentina, 71 in Brazil and 82 per 1000 in Mexico. Finally, illiteracy in Cuba is 3.9% of the population over 15 years of age while in Argentina it is 6.1%, in Brazil 25.5% and in Mexico 17.4%. Socialist Cuba has made the mass of Cuban people the primary beneficiaries of its development model.



U.S. Capitalism Thrives?: Turning from the Third World to the United States, we find that capitalism is busily making the rich richer and the poor poorer. Between 1979 and 1987 the average family income to the poorest fifth of our population declined by 6.1% while the average family income of the wealthiest fifth rose 11.1%. In 1987 the wealthiest 5% of the population took home 16.9% of the total national income in the United States while the poorest 40% of the U.S. population took home only 15.4% of the national income. The average poor family in the U.S. spends 78% of its income on housing and there are an estimated 20 million Americans who do not receive adequate nutrition and are hungry. *From 1980 to 1985 more children in the U.S. died as a result of poverty, hungry and malnutrition than there were U.S. military deaths in the Vietnam War and this continues with one child dying of poverty or malnutrition in the U.S. every 50 minutes.*

Unfortunately, U.S. capitalism doesn't seem to be color-blind. The number of black people as a percentage of all blacks in poverty rose from 31% in 1979 to 33% in 1987; Hispanics rose from 22% to 28%; and whites rose only from 9% to 11%.

American capitalism has contributed mightily to the industrial development of this country but, by its very nature, it exacerbates the problems of poverty, environmental degradation, expensive

and inadequate health care, alienating work, racial inequality, and inadequate housing. The intrinsic contradiction is that capitalism works best when wealth is being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

Great Changes: Finally, let us look at the socialist countries where undeniably great changes are occurring. Unfortunately, *what these changes really are is very hard for us here in the United States to decipher* as most of the news we receive is filtered by the ideology of our corporate media. For example, during the popular protests by the Chinese students and workers, our media conveyed the impression that the students wanted democracy and capitalism. In reality, the students, singing the communist anthem, *The International*, and carrying red flags, wanted popular democracy and, significantly, an end to the capitalist experiment in China. Workers and students perceived that the economic reforms begun in the late 1970s had caused increasing inflation, corruption, speculation, and unemployment. The "reformed" Chinese system combined the worst of both worlds: capitalism and dictatorship. Eventually the students and workers rose up against the increasing exploitation conducted by an alleged Marxist government and the pro-capitalism reformers in the Chinese government ordered their repression.

The revolt in the socialist world is first and foremost a revolt against the ossified, reactionary regimes full of old men who stand in the way of popular control of the decision-making process. Just as capitalist development can take place under either a democratic or an authoritarian political system, so, too, can socialist development. Far from the death of socialism, we are seeing the construction of the foundation for the next stage of democratic, popular socialism. In the West, what we are witnessing is not the triumph of capitalism but the triumph of capitalist ideology. This ideological self-obfuscation will only serve to hide the contradictions generated by the enrichment of the few and the impoverishment of the many until it is too late and the next crisis of capitalism appears. Perhaps at that point, the popular democratic socialist countries will serve as a model for the West and the capitalists of the day will not be as lucky as they were in the 1930s.

Sources:

Dollars & Sense: March 1989; June 1989; September 1989
Monthly Review: May 1989; November 1989
Latinamerica Press, September 7, 1989
South, November 1989
The State and Capital Accumulation in Latin America, C. Anglade and C. Fortin, eds., 1985



¿Como se llaman, ya'll?

by Randi Romo

Mama and I walked alongside the group but I wasn't much listening to the tour guide's story of brave heroes and cowardly Mexicans. Mama had dragged me along with her to visit the Alamo and although we were both originally from Texas it had been many years since we'd been back. Mama was acting like a regular tourist and I was bored beyond belief. I couldn't wait for the tour to be done so that we could go have lunch but mama was determined that we were going to connect to "home" and more importantly that after our long period of estrangement; we would reconnect to each other.

I was in my early twenties, and Mama and I were on a trip to visit her family in Texas, people I had almost no memory of. We had moved away when I was four and settled in central Florida. With that move, we had left our Mexican culture and language behind. I'd gone off to the restroom and upon returning I came upon my mother standing in a shadowed archway, her profile in stark relief against the bright light of the outer courtyard. Her indigenous features, testifying to her heritage as both American and Mexican Indian, created a sharp contrast to the brutal picture that was being painted by the tour guide about Mexican people. I felt a void in the center of my being begun to fill up. Right at that moment the realization came to me that I was a part of the people being reviled here. This was also my history and I was Mexican. The memories of childhood shook themselves out of the storage box where I kept them tucked away all nice and neat. And, I remembered.

Our new daddy to be was younger than mama; he'd only been out of high school a couple of years when they met in the small Florida town where we lived. According to mama he had looked so handsome walking up to the bus stop in his crisp Air Force uniform, a real live flyboy. He was a tall, skinny, blond, blue eyed, freckle faced fellow with ears he had yet to grow into. I guess that at this point it would be redundant to say that he was white, also. And mama, why she was so beautiful she made men's heads turn around to look again when she walked by. She was petite with brown skin, gorgeous black hair and black eyes the color of the sky on a moonless night.

It didn't matter to flyboy about the age difference or the fact that she had three children. Smitten, yeah that's the word, smitten. They were caught up in each other in that breathless, whirling way that you read about in a paperback romance novel. I can still remember what it felt like to be in the room with them when they started courting. The

air crackled with the energy of the two of them and the joy, happiness and laughter of that time still rings loud in my memories these many years later.

Before anyone knew it, there was a wedding. Mama and the flyboy were married at a friend's house out by the pool. He wore his dress uniform and she had a new dress for the occasion. My two brothers and I were stuffed into our Sunday best, they in little matching suits with bow ties and boutonnières on their lapels and me in shiny patent leather shoes and a frilly dress with so many ruffles that I couldn't hardly hold my arms down at my sides.

Despite her newfound love and happiness, mama was also terribly sad, only his family had come to the ceremony. Mama's folks begged off because it was too far away, well that and the fact that they disapproved of the marriage. He was white, and worse still, he was not Catholic! As a matter of fact, he was one of ten children in a Pentecostal family. To add to her sadness, the Catholic Church was in the process of excommunicating her for remarrying. It seems that although divorce was frowned upon by the church, it was the actual act of getting married again that got you kicked off the roster. It didn't matter that she left my alcoholic and abusive father to save us and her. Mama was heartbroken and devastated.

Unbeknownst to us, flyboy had created quite a ripple in his little hometown bringing home a Mexican wife. Not only that, she was a divorcée and had three kids to boot! In the blink of an eye all of the local family doings, quarrels and gossip were forgotten. Mama was caught dead center in the middle of the bull's eye, fresh meat for the gossip mill; a mill that regularly crushed and ground away at her spirit.

Soon enough Southern fare became the standard for our table; moving away from the more traditional Mexican foods that mama had always prepared for us. However, it quickly became very clear that beans transcended all cultures. During the times that we were the most poor we had a joke that it was never a question of "if" we were going to be having beans, but rather the question was; would it be a new pot of beans or beans reheated from the day before. Our bean menu also expanded from just pintos to many other varieties. We didn't go to the Catholic Church anymore, instead, attending flyboy brother's Pentecostal church. Mama no longer sang or spoke in Spanish. What my brothers and I knew of



Her indigenous features, testifying to her heritage as both American and Mexican Indian, created a sharp contrast to the brutal picture that was being painted by the tour guide about Mexican people. I felt a void in the center of my being begun to fill up. Right at that moment the realization came to me that I was a part of the people being reviled here.



Randi Romo (in sunglasses) with her mom, Margarita Romo

the language dried up dead from its lack of use, turning into dusty faded memories that lay in the back of our throats; dead in a world that pushed hard at mama and flyboy to make us all white instead of who we were, Mexican-Americans. We were cut off from what we knew about mama's culture and our heritage, because there was no one else to share it with us. At the same time flyboy's family was working hard to assimilate us into their world. And with us not knowing any better and mama wanting the best for us; my brothers and I went along with the program.

It cost us a lot, both culturally and in our immediate family. The more my mama came to resemble a Southern June Cleaver with a good tan, the unhappier she became. My mama grieved the loss of her family, the lack of understanding and compassion in her new family and the loss of anything familiar to her culturally. Her grief knew no bounds over the Catholic Church's decision to excommunicate her. For all that mama had been so crazy in love with flyboy; the price she paid to marry him had become almost unbearable. Mama's intense mourning made her prone to spells of deep depression that almost paralyzed her. Our lives would be forever marked by her grief and all that came with it as she struggled to find a place where she fit in the world of organized religion and a comfortable place for herself in the Southern culture that was so foreign to her. In time mama and her beloved flyboy would be divorced and mama would make her way back to the shores of her culture and people.

Not long after the divorce, mama fully reclaimed her people, culture and language. While I and two of my brothers had faint memories that tied us to our heritage, it had not been our way of life. For all intents and purposes, the growing up years had seen us being assimilated into white Southern culture. Although at the time, without being able to explain why, I had always been uncomfortable and never quite felt like I belonged to anybody. Still, it was what I knew. So when mama embraced the Mexican farmworker community and began to do social justice and advocacy work with them, we didn't quite know what to make of it. By this time, mama and I had already had our own share of estrangement and this added to the barriers between us. She had become someone that I vaguely remembered. I had not seen her in so many years that I had come to accept the version that she had become in her own period of assimilation. So, while her return to her people seemed a bit strange, our separation kept us from any real conversations about it.

The stories being told by the Alamo's tour guide repeated the lessons of my school years and somehow in that moment a certainty came to me that there was more than what I knew or what he was telling us. I began to feel disjointed, like parts of me were separating out and clamoring for their names, their place in my life. I looked at my mother, my Mexican mother and again at the white tour guide and I was turned upside down and inside out when in that instant I recognized that it was MY Mother, MY People. That it was ME that he was referring to. A slow rage began to spread all through me from the ball of heat roiling in my stomach as the guide continued his vilification of the Mexican people; his words dropping red hot coals that fed the fire. Somehow I got through the rest of the tour, but I left the Alamo that day with a purpose, a resolve, a need to find out who I was.

In the years that have since passed I have been on an incredible journey of reclamation of my Mexican heritage and identity. At the same time it has brought with it a great deal of conflict over the place where I had been raised. I'd grown up not thinking at

all about my Mexican identity, absorbed into the dominant culture around me. Despite my dark hair and eyes, my lighterskin coupled with my decidedly Southern accent often has me mistaken as being a good ol' Southern gal. This perceived identity opens doors for me that

Today my identity is very much a blend. I often refer to myself as a Southern Mexican as in, "como se llaman, ya'll." I recognize that I am as much a child of the South as I am a child of Aztlán.



Photo: Randi Romo, standing with her mom, Margarita and maternal grandfather, seated.

often seem to stick a bit, once my identity as a Mexican-American is known. Regardless, for me,

being Mexican is as much a part of my identity as is being Southern. The realization and ownership of my heritage has brought with it greater understandings that much of what I had accepted as being the norm while growing up was anything but.

In learning about who I am, a woman of color, it was inevitable that I would be able to look back and clearly see the prejudice, intolerance and racism of many of those that I grew up around and was related to through my stepfather. I look back on the way that my mama was treated when we first went to that little southern town to live and I see that it isn't much different from the way Latinos are being treated today as they make new homes in the South. I do know that it wasn't all bad; there were many good times, experiences and people that were a part of my life growing up in the South. And I know that this is still true today, but there's still enough of the bad to make the good seem a bit less than it could or should be.

Today my identity is very much a blend. I often refer to myself as a Southern Mexican as in, "como se llaman, ya'll." I recognize that I am as much a child of the South as I am a child of Aztlán. Biscuits, tortillas, sweet tea, Jarritos, carnitas, and fried chicken, I am a part of the new South.

Not long ago one of flyboy's sisters brought a Cuban man that she was dating home to a holiday dinner. As I was heading into the kitchen with dishes from the table I overheard some of my other aunts talking, it seemed they were shocked by their sister's choice of a date. One of them said, "Well, I know he seems nice enough, but if she just had to date one of them Hispanics I don't know why she couldn't find her a nice Mexican, we already know one of them. Lord knows we don't know anything about those Cubans."

Bio: Randi M. Romo, a Texas born Chicana who grew up in the South, is co-founder and Executive Director of the Center for Artistic Revolution, a Little Rock, AR based LGBTQ-centric social justice org. Randi is also an artist and a slam poet.

THE WOMEN OF JUÁREZ

at the West tip of Texas
a line divides us from them
and on the other side
they all look like me
yet on my side we sit passively nearby
while the other side allows a slow genocide

500 missing women
some claim more
some less
some dismissed as runaways
against parents protest
hundreds found dead
hundreds still missing
the exact count is a mystery
and those disappearing daily
they all look like me

I am a dead ringer
for an army of the dead
Mexico's slaughtered sisters
all slim
long dark hair
petite
some say pretty

all young
all lost
or dead
and they all look like me

some foolishly search for one serial killer
when bus and cab drivers
even cops are under suspicion
while the ever growing numbers reflect an entire society
where young women are expendable
young women like me

mothers recognize raped and mutilated remains
daughter's clothes with mismatched human bones
DNA that doesn't match
those are her shoes
but that's not her hat
this shirt is my sister's
but those aren't her slacks
dumped like trash
burnt to ash
in the desert that keeps its secrets

one body found in the middle of the street
in a neighborhood not unlike mine
on this side of the line
I am alive
and my father reclines
in his retired military easy-chair bliss
of Ft. Bliss

Mom and Dad warn to be careful
but aren't overly concerned
when my brothers and I
cross from El Paso to Juárez
for late-night cheap college drink-a-thons
as long as we stay on the touristy paths
that may exploit
but do protect Americans and our American dreams

we are different
and even my parents don't seem to see
all those missing women
they all look like me

but I am told I am different
less Mexican
less poor
American thus worth more
different

yet all I can see are eerie similarities
they all worked like I do
so many last seen
going to or coming from work
at US corporate owned maquiladoras
but I'm told this isn't an American issue
and I'm lucky here on the safe side

safe
yet not quite out of earshot of distant cries
of families searching ditches and roadsides
bearing snapshot after snapshot
of my brown eyes

Have you seen this girl?
She is my sister.
La has visto?
Es mi nina.
my baby
mi hermana
my wife
Have you seen her?
This face? Esta cara?

When you fit the profile of a predator's prey.
You can't help but take the crimes personally.

I am a symbol of those who survive.
mouth open in defiance of their silence
spared by a line in the sand
drawn between their grandfather
and mine
and if that line had fallen closer to home
somewhere between you and I
who would I be?
what would my worth be then?
and if silenced who would speak for me?

KIN ACROSS THE LINE

Kamala Platt, for *La Voz*, May, 2009

The following is gathered from comments given at two events, each on April 15, one year and 235 miles apart. I shared "On Femicide..." at The University of Texas, Pan American where I was teaching as part of a South Texas series of events calling attention to human rights issues.

*This year, I was happy to join students and staff at Our Lady of the Lake University who were planning several events on the struggles of Las Mujeres de Ciudad Juárez as part of their Week of Silence. My fellow presenters were mujeres doing important organizing work on their (Mexican) side of the border: Maria Luisa Andrade who spent several days in San Antonio talking about her work, frustrations and hopes, will be writing about her experiences in a second part of this discussion for *La Voz*. Anjelica Morales Palomo has shared her stories with students visiting Ciudad Acuña for years—I*

first met her there when I was teaching at Incarnate Word over a decade ago. At that time she told us about the experience of working in colonias

and her then recent change to doing activist work, after maquila-related health problems forced her to quit the maquilas.

These women offer perspectives on the struggles in Juárez that are of primary importance. On the US side of the border, we have the responsibility to not only hear their words, but to spread our words of support for our hermanas on the other side of the political line that is the border.

For many of us, Amalia Ortiz's words mark a special connection with the young women killed in Juárez with the refrain to her poem "they all look me" (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWJjPDe2pWk).

Other links to cultural poetics can be obtained from lavoz@esperanzacenter.org

If we think of the mujeres en la frontera as kin—as they may well be, we are compelled to act on that connection.

On Femicide And A Sampling Of Cultural Poetics In Tribute To The Women Of Juárez En La Lucha

Today I will share what I call cultural poetics—creative expressions from those who care about an issue-- what some have termed a "femicide" along the Texas México border, most specifically in El Paso's sister city, Ciudad de Juárez.

Unlike many of you I did not grow up along this Texas México border, but my aunt, mi tía, did. If I have the story right, she grew up in Juárez and crossed over for school in El Paso. As a young girl she met my uncle who was stationed there with the Air Force—this was evidently a life-shaping experience for both of them—my mom's brother, a Kansas schoolteacher's son and his new found novia, the daughter of Chihuahua shopkeepers. One of my very first memories is the trip by train to their wedding. (My mother tells of my making word play on the way as the conductor was announcing the next stop—"Tucumcari Tucumcari." Already independent, evidently, I told my mother: "Tucumcari, but One can carry, too...." Too young to know the political significance of either border-crossings or marriage, I remember things from a toddler's viewpoint, deep colores (on the walls), música, and people who spoke a language with a different lilt.

My mother tells the story of crossing back after the wedding—my parents—knowing very little Spanish at the time--driving back across the border in a borrowed car (because, probably my uncle had met the train beforehand, in the car that he and my aunt would have then driven away in after the wedding). When we needed to leave to catch the train my parents were told "at the border, if they ask, just tell them it's Eduardo's car:" those were the instructions when my parents and I crossed back. They were not even sure which of the wedding guests Eduardo was but drove his car to El Paso and left it at the train station for later pick up.

That is my first crossing story and it compares to the millions of crossing stories that have happened daily for decades, if not centuries (though the means of transport has changed) among those of us who live in the borderlands. It contrasts to another kind of crossing story, the

story our speaker told a couple of weeks ago of immigrants being sprayed with dangerous pesticides upon entrance to the US because they were presumed to need "delousing" —the first of many experiences of environmental racism, here.

The "amistad" stories contrast with many contemporary stories of crossing the river or the desert on the sly perhaps with a coyote to evade detection, to evade La Migra, to evade the Minutemen (who returned to the Valley this Spring), stories of border-crossers who pay large amounts of money they cannot afford, risk their lives--leave their families, in order to provide for them.

Why am I telling childhood crossing stories in this plática on the killings of women in Juárez? Because these stories bond us, they humanize those we too often see only as victims, as those who have little to do with our lives; these stories allow us to see the women under siege as family. These women, too, come to the borderlands from the interior, come for family, come young and more alone than they are used to. Like my parents, they may not know the language well, (even on the Mexican side, increasing numbers of immigrants to the northern Mexican border do not speak Spanish as a first language).

Poetry, art, story, cultural poetics allows us more dimensions, a more whole picture of an issue than a news or a scientific report, alone, does. Today, I speak in the borderlands, and



Lilia Alejandra García Andrade, a victim of the Juárez femicides, is in the photograph held by her mother, Norma Andrade (rt.) and her sister Malu (left).

I think most of you are thinking about your borderland/crossing stories right now—and most of those stories will be like my aunt’s schoolgirl story, like my first memories of the colors of paint on the walls in the room of the house where we changed for the wedding that contrasted with the wall paper patterns in houses I’d seen in Kansas. We gravitate both to what is familiar and to what is new and different. But fear can be a tool to destroy, to erase our similarities and to demonize our differences; that fear is generated in the most unexpected places because it is a play for power, and we know much about that in the borderlands, too. Cultivating fear will not get us closer to our dreams, to our families, to the truth, nor will it protect any of these. Harboring fear harbors only false security. This is the lesson that the borderlands everywhere can bring to the rest of the world.

The stories found on the weblinks I’ll present are stories of women in Juárez, a metropolis, a desert, a village... These stories are the stories of women and men, these are the stories of all peoples whose lives are disenfranchised by power and violence, much of it structural, much of that structure built on the backs of our own communities—today is tax day—do you know where your taxes are? Where they are going when you put them in the mail tonight? Where those unseen dollars go that are not refunded to you? I’ll leave you to think about the connections of taxes to women’s bodies later, but I end this introduction with a chant that has

bringing healing and justice—even in the midst of the heightened saliency of border security. On one hand, this is not surprising. While the threats and effects of gun, drug and human trafficking across borders are real and horrible, the alarmism rhetoric and scare tactics of “spillover violence.” miss the mark, as does the media that tends to ignore the serial killings in Juárez and other border area communities. What is missing is an even-handed look at the human rights issues in the context of the structural and direct violence generated from both sides of the border. What did trouble — if not surprise me — is that the silence over Juárez extended beyond mainstream and Rightist media. The silence was more persuasive than the border violence hype because it extended to the alternative news media where there has been a glaring overall absence of coverage.

As *Senorita Extraviada* and much other grassroots poetics in the streets and on the net illustrates, the young women’s situations as maquiladora workers, lessen their security in many ways. The apparatus of maquiladora borderlands—set up for international (often US) corporate profit—presents structural, as well as direct, violence for workers but also lots of profits for the owners. Human rights, along with environmental concerns, in these situations are, in the

Poetry, art, story, cultural poetics allows us more dimensions, a more whole picture of an issue than a news report, alone, does.



Artwork: *ReDressing Injustice* by Irene Simmons | <http://ccsre.stanford.edu/femicide/network.html>

become common in struggle, in lucha... todos somos inmigrantes, todos somos women of the deserts of Juárez, of Sudan, of Iraq... we have made the deserts... our silence allows the bodies to build up, yes... perhaps even more so, our inability to listen, to hear another’s words as our own, as our own children’s first word play... We must bring the bodies home for burial. Tucumcari. One can carry, too... And we must. Todos somos...

Our Lady of the Lake Panel & Discussion, 4/15/09

On a day when the federal government at the behest of state government officials has announced a new “border czar” it is appropriate and timely that we have gathered to heed the violence against young Latinas in Juárez. What is still missing is the dedicated awareness and political will to address the violence, death and suffering of 100s of young women that has continued for decades now. My remarks will address the media and political/governmental (en ambos lados) silence over women’s human rights in the recent spate of attention paid to alleged violence in the borderlands (and subsequently the H1N1 flu). My perspective on this issue has been shaped by living, teaching and researching in the southernmost Texas region.

In preparing for this evening’s remarks, I spent some time looking for recent news coverage. I also got in touch with colleagues who have promoted the awareness of the violence and spoken about the organizing against that violence predominantly by women, families and communities involved. This year I found the same stories I’ve heard told for years—new deaths in the new year with little hope for stopping the violence, solving the crimes,

term Al Gore has made memorable, “an inconvenient truth.” Yet I would argue that it is by addressing, calling attention to, and solving the crimes behind women’s deaths in the Chihuahuan deserts, we can determine an appropriate path toward lessening the borderlands’ violence. Those thinking this is “only” a women’s issues, seen pejoratively, might re-examine the connections to concerns about the US availability of guns and lax gun laws, the propensity of drug sales here, the apparatus of corporate international capitalism and US training practices with other country’s military/police. By seeing the human expense in the addiction to profit and by giving the dignity and respect of our concerned attention to those suffering the collateral damage of capital, we might shift winds, change direction of the blowing sands and smog, and in so doing we might reveal the real answers: we might renew the security of amistad in our relations with our neighbors and bring down the specter of terror under which many families are living.

Bio: Kamala Platt is an independent scholar, writer/artist and professor who has worked in Texas, New York, New Mexico, Oregon, Kansas, and Chicago; she received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at the University of Texas, Austin; Her book, “Environmental Justice Poetics: Cultural Representations of Environmental Racism from Chicanas and South Asian Women” investigate practice, theory, and aesthetics of women generating cultural poetics that promote environmental justice.

FEMICIDIO DE JUÁREZ EN RECTA FINAL EN CORTE INTER- AMERICANA

ESCRITO POR DANIELA ESTRADA, IPS, SANTIAGO, 29 DE ABRIL

“Tengo fe y confianza en los jueces de esta Corte. Tengo fe de que vamos a obtener justicia”, dijo a IPS en Santiago de Chile Benita Monárrez, progenitora de una de las jóvenes mexicanas asesinadas en 2001 en Ciudad Juárez, en el estado de Chihuahua y lindante con la localidad estadounidense de El Paso. Los crímenes aún siguen impunes. La audiencia pública en la que participó Monárrez se realizó el martes y este miércoles en la capital de Chile, país elegido por la Corte con sede en San José de Costa Rica para llevar a cabo su XXXIX Período Extraordinario de Sesiones.

En octubre de 2001, ocho mujeres aparecieron

mueras con signos de tortura, violación y mutilación en un descampado conocido como Campo Algodonero, en Ciudad Juárez, siendo identificadas sólo tres de ellas: Claudia Ivette González, de 20 años, Laura Berenice Ramos Monárrez, de 17 años, y Esmeralda Herrera Monreal, de 15 años. Luego de denunciar diversas irregularidades en el proceso de investigación de los casos, las madres de estas tres jóvenes presentaron en 2002 una demanda ante la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, con sede en Washington y que al igual que la Corte forma parte del sistema de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA). El 4 de noviembre de 2007 este organismo elevó el caso a la Corte, que en la actualidad es presidida por la jurista chilena Cecilia Medina. Este tribunal es un órgano autónomo de la OEA. En los dos días de alegatos en Santiago intervinieron los familiares de las víctimas y sus representantes, así como delegados de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos y del Estado de México, entre otros peritos y testigos.

Los representantes de la Comisión solicitaron a los siete jueces de la Corte declarar al Estado de México responsable de violaciones a los derechos humanos contenidos en la Convención Americana, en la Convención de los Derechos del Niño y en la Convención Interamericana para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia contra la Mujer, conocida como Convención de Belem do Pará. Entre ellos figuran los derechos a la vida, a las garantías judiciales y a la protección judicial. Además de reclamar verdad, justicia y reparación para los tres casos, los demandantes acusan al Estado mexicano de falta de prevención, considerando que desde 1993 las mujeres de Ciudad Juárez son víctimas de feminicidios o femicidios, como se les llama al asesinato por causa de género. En la demanda también se alega presunta falta de respuesta de las autoridades frente a la desaparición de las víctimas y presunta falta de diligencia en la investigación, entre otras violaciones a los derechos humanos.

Los familiares de las víctimas y sus representantes también reclaman sanciones para los funcionarios responsables de las irregularidades, que según el Estado mexicano ya fueron cursadas. En este sentido, los representantes de la Comisión Interamericana señalaron que las negligencias y omisiones detectadas en la investigación obedecen a actitudes discriminatorias contra las mujeres. “Tenemos la esperanza de ganar y que se haga justicia con nuestras hijas”, dijo a periodistas Josefina González, madre de Claudia, quien acusó a los representantes del Estado mexicano de mentir en la audiencia sobre diversos puntos. “Yo y las otras mamás siempre hemos dicho que (detrás de los asesinatos de las tres jóvenes) hay un poderoso que no quieren investigar o son los policías (los autores), porque no han encontrado a los verdaderos culpables”, indicó la mujer. En la audiencia, los familiares de las víctimas dijeron sentir



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temor a represalias por sus declaraciones.

Benita Monárrez está asilada en Estados Unidos desde 2006 producto de los hostigamientos, según explicó. Los representantes del Estado mexicano, entre ellos la procuradora general de Justicia del Estado de Chihuahua, Patricia González, reconocieron la existencia de irregularidades en la primera fase de la investigación, entre 2001 y 2004, hasta que asumió la actual administración. Desde ese momento, aseguró, se ha llevado a cabo una investigación “seria y objetiva”, descartando las denuncias de falta de apoyo hechas por los familiares de las víctimas. La procuradora González enumeró una serie de avances institucionales, legislativos y judiciales registrados tanto en Chihuahua como en el resto del país en los últimos años y aseguró que el caso del “Campo Algodonero” se resolverá pronto. Ya se identificó “al probable responsable de dos de los casos (de Esmeralda y Laura) y tenemos confianza que en el caso de Claudia Ivette, con esa línea de investigación, también tendrá resultados muy positivos”, dijo la procuradora a periodistas. “Los próximos meses tendremos resultados. Lo único que nos falta es que nos brinden las órdenes de aprehensión para ir a

Historic Femicide Trial Gets Underway



Thousands of miles and a continent away, it's a long haul from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, to Santiago, Chile. But that's where the road to justice led Benita Monarrez, Irma Monreal and Josefina González. Mothers of murder victims, the three women from the Mexican border city pressed their case last week against the Mexican government as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights opened a milestone trial in Santiago, Chile.

Marking the first time the Organization of American States' court has heard a Mexican femicide case, the historic legal proceeding centers on the slayings of three young women who were found with five other female victims in a Ciudad Juárez cotton field in 2001. The three victims, Esmeralda Herrera Monreal, 14, Laura Berenice Ramos Monarrez, 17, and Claudia Ivette González, 20, all went missing between September 25 and October 29, 2001.

Counting only two months in Ciudad Juárez at the time of her disappearance, Herrera was a domestic worker employed by Mitla Caballero. A high school student, Ramos also worked for the Fogueiras restaurant. An assembly-line worker for the US-owned Lear Corporation, González was turned away at the plant gate because she was a few minutes late and then vanished. Relatives contend the disappearances and subsequent murders of their loved ones were never truly investigated or punished by the Mexican government.

For example, Benita Monarrez has stated that two investigators from the Chihuahua state attorney general's office (PGJE), Ramirez and Miramontes, personally knew two young men, "El Gato" and "El Perico" who appeared in a previous photo taken with Laura Berenice Ramos. When pressed to explain their relationship to the mysterious pair, the law enforcement officials clammed up, Monarrez has asserted.

An assembly-line worker for the US-owned Lear Corporation, Gonzalez was turned away at the plant gate because she was a few minutes late and then vanished.



Top left: Claudia González and bottom right: Laura Ramos Monarrez, victims of Juárez femicides.



Photo Right: L to R, Josefina González, U.N rep. Florenti Meléndez, Irma Monreal, and Benita Monarrez.

Photo: Maria Grusauskas - The Santiago Times

Together with other organizations, Ciudad Juárez's Citizens Network for Non-Violence and Human Dignity called the Inter-American Court case a "historic opportunity" for femicide victims not only in Ciudad Juárez but in the rest of Mexico and the Americas as well.

The Long Road to Chile

Many irregularities marked the Mexican government's response to the disappearance of the three young women, who vanished along with numerous others in both Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua City during 2001. The disappearances followed a pattern of young, low-income women suddenly disappearing in the northern Mexican state since at least the early 1990s. Several suspects were investigated or arrested in the cotton field slayings, but human rights activists and other observers widely criticized government legal cases as lacking any shred of

...cont'd pg 12

detenerlos", apuntó. Pero los familiares de las jóvenes asesinadas dudan del accionar de la justicia mexicana porque aseguraron que ésta "ha inventado" numerosos falsos culpables en estos ocho años.

Los representantes de la Comisión complementaron que la Corte no puede fallar sobre lo que sucederá en "el futuro" sino sobre los problemas cometidos en el pasado. Más aún cuando los feminicidios siguen ocurriendo. Para la madre de Claudia, la situación en Ciudad Juárez no ha cambiado nada desde 2001 "porque hay más muchachitas desaparecidas y muchas mamás no han encontrado a sus hijas". A juicio de los abogados de derechos humanos, el fallo de la Corte puede ser histórico no sólo para las familias de las víctimas, sino para toda la región

porque establecería jurisprudencia en casos de violencia contra las mujeres. En su resolución, la Corte deberá pronunciarse sobre la solicitud de "excepción preliminar" presentada por el Estado mexicano para ésta se declare incompetente para conocer sobre eventuales violaciones a los derechos humanos contenidos en la Convención de Belem do Pará. Las partes del caso tienen plazo hasta el 1 de junio para hacer llegar por escrito a la Corte los alegatos finales del caso. Por ello se espera que el fallo se conozca en el segundo semestre de este año. Según la procuradora de Chihuahua, de un total de 447 casos de feminicidios registrados entre 1993 hasta 2008 en Ciudad Juárez, 201 cuentan con sentencia definitiva, mientras que en otros 51 casos hay personas detenidas sujetas a proceso. ■

FEMICIDIO

PG 10 CONT'D

credibility.

The grisly discoveries of the eight cotton field victims on November 6 and 7, 2001, set in motion a chain of events that culminated in the Inter-American Court trial. In 2002, the mothers of Herrera, Ramos and González filed a complaint with the Washington-based Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) that charged the Mexican government with committing human rights violations and denying justice in the cases of their daughters.

After finally determining that the Mexican government never provided an adequate response to the petitioners, the IACHR pursued the next step in the OAS human rights system and referred the case to the Inter-American Court in late 2007. The international legal institution is considering the cotton field case based on

the Mexican government's alleged violations of the American Convention on Human Rights and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belem Do Para), international agreements that uphold popular access to the justice system and the right of women to live without violence. Under the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court, Mexico is obliged to follow any rulings the legal body will issue.

Last year, Mexico filed a preliminary defense but did not submit all the documents requested by the Inter-American Court, according to a statement from the legal body. The mothers seek reparations of damages from the Mexican government, the launching of a serious murder investigation and the dismissal and sanctioning of officials involved in allegedly botching their daughters' cases, among other remedies.

Showdown in Santiago

On April 28 and 29, 2009, the mothers and Mexican government mustered their respective forces in Santiago, Chile, for a legal battle that will be heard around the world. Supported by Mexican and international lawyers and human rights activists, the mothers from Ciudad Juárez spent several hours retelling their stories to the judges.

In her testimony, Benita Monarrez accused Mexican government officials of covering-up the murders for other officials involved in the crimes.

"This trial proves we are right. The state has never approached us, always acting with a lot of hypocrisy and nothing has changed," Josefina González testified. "I don't believe anything is going to change if the court doesn't help us in the name of all the women

of Mexico."

For its defense, the Mexican government flew in a team from the Foreign Relations Ministry and the PGJE, including Chihuahua State Attorney General Patricia González. Chihuahua's top law enforcement official said she was satisfied to represent the Mexican state and its "tireless work of changing the logic of gender themes and the murder of women in my country."

González admitted that numerous irregularities characterized the cotton field investigations during 2001-2004, but insisted



Source: www.latinamericapress.org/informes.asp?inf=3

authorities cleaned up their act afterward, reordered the investigation and moved forward with a statewide legal reform—a project supported by the United States Agency for International Development. The PGJE stands ready and willing to provide additional reparations and assistance to the mothers, González said.

"There were omissions and irregularities before my service," González said, "not only in these cases but other ones too that have since been resolved and the mothers left totally satisfied."

González's comments were reminiscent of statements made by previous PGJE personnel, including former Ciudad Juárez special prosecutor Suly Ponce (1998-2001), who frequently accused predecessors for widespread disarray in the femicide investigations only to be later blamed themselves by successors.

Rodrigo Caballero, a special homicide investigator for the PGJE told the Santiago courtroom that Chihuahua legal authorities know of two men involved in the women's murders.

Currently, the state's prime suspect is Edgar Alvarez Cruz, who was fingered by an old friend, Jose Francisco Granados de la Paz. The two young men came to public light in 2006 when Tony Garza, then the US ambassador in Mexico, made a sensational announcement that US authorities were cooperating with Mexican officials in what could be a major break in the cotton field case.

A former Ciudad Juárez resident who had been living in Denver, Colorado, Cruz was deported to Mexico to face charges based on a "confession" made by Granados to the Texas Rangers.

Alvarez has since been convicted of the murder of another cotton field victim, Mayra Juliana Reyes Solis, whose slaying is not part of the Inter-American Court case. Alvarez lost an appeal in a Mexican court last month, and is serving a 26-year sentence.



Photo: More than 1,000 women dressed in black holding candles marched through Mexico City in November, 2002 to demand that those responsible for killing hundreds of women in Ciudad Juárez be brought to justice. (AP Photo/ Ismael Rojas)

to abusing drugs and alcohol, Granados was emotionally disturbed and overcome with hallucinatory flights of fancy, according to relatives.

Abraham Hinojos, defense attorney for Alvarez, said his client's rejected appeal was also a loss to society since "we continue in the same (legal) practices."

David Peña, attorney for Irma Monreal, ridiculed the Mexican state's defense in Chile as simulation designed to "make it appear they are doing something."

With oral testimony completed in Chile last week, the Inter-American Court will review legal documents and deliberate the merits of the case. A decision is expected later this year or early next year. Typically, the OAS court conducts proceedings in countries not involved in a legal complaint. Hence the trail setting of Santiago, Chile, another continent and an entire season removed from Ciudad Juárez.

Local Fall-Out from the OAS Case

In Ciudad Juárez and the state of Chihuahua, the Inter-American Court case reopened a huge can of worms. Purported PGJE documents leaked to El Diario newspaper, contended the Mexican government had provided generous compensation to the families of the three cotton field murder victims involved in the OAS case.

In a detailed piece published on the 2nd day of the Santiago trial, El Diario said the mothers and other named relatives of Herrera, Ramos and González, received money for funeral expenses, educational grants, homes, and businesses including a tortilla shop and small grocery store. The state support surpassed more than a million dollars, according to El Diario. State government assistance also consisted of providing medical and psychological services for surviving family members, El Diario reported.

Besides the very personal details reported in the El Diario story, the newspaper account was unusual in that it included

Alvarez and his family vehemently deny the murder charges, pointing to contradictions and irregularities in the state's most recent cotton field case.

In past statements to Ciudad Juárez media, members of Granados' own family questioned the credibility of their relative. Reportedly prone

information that reportedly will be used in the Inter-American Court proceedings. Mexican officials routinely deny reporters access to sensitive legal documents which are part of ongoing cases.

Whether the story is accurate or not, it could refuel disagreements between different groups of victims' mothers.

Before it was quickly yanked from El Diario's website, the story drew sharp comments from several readers. An individual identified as Tararecua questioned when Guatemala (scene of thousands of femicides) and the US would be tried internationally for murders of women, including the 11 bodies discovered in Albuquerque, New Mexico, last February. Another writer identified as Esperanza applauded the Inter-American Court's action, but urged the OAS legal authorities to hold Mexican officials accountable for allowing a violent criminal gang to run amok in the Juárez Valley.

Two other documents related to the cotton field case also grabbed media and public attention in recent days. Portions of a PGJE report submitted to the Inter-American court were challenged by a separate report from the Argentine Anthropological Forensic Team, a group of investigators contracted several years ago by the PGJE under pressure from activists and relatives of disappeared women to identify the remains of unknown female murder victims in Ciudad Juárez and

Media reports indicate the true number of female murder victims during the time covered by the PGJE report is more than 600.

Chihuahua City.

The PGJE report contended the majority of 447 women's murders in Ciudad Juárez between 1993 and December 2008 have been duly prosecuted, with more than 60 percent of the cases solved and scores of murderers brought to justice. The Argentine forensic experts, however, questioned several aspects of the report. Media reports indicate the true number of female murder victims during the time covered by the PGJE report is more than 600.

Chilean Judge Cecilia Medina Quiroga, president of the Inter-American Court, requested the Mexican government turn over an accounting of all the women's murder cases supposedly resolved in the 1993-2008 period.

Ticked off by the contradictory reports, Chihuahua state lawmaker Antonio Sandoval proposed last week that the Chihuahua State Congress pass a resolution demanding the PGJE provide a report on its femicide report and explain how much money the state agency has spent publicizing the information.

While new battles brew over old but unresolved issues, three mothers of Ciudad Juárez murder victims await a verdict from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

"There was no justice done in Mexico, and this the last opportunity the mothers have," said WOLA's Maureen Meyer. ■

Note: Article reprinted from www.nmsu.edu/~frontera/

Additional sources: Norte, May 3, 2009. Article by Nohemi Barraza and Guadalupe Salcido. Lapolaka.com, April 29 and May 1, 2009. El Paso Times, May 1, 2009. Article by Diana Washington Valdez. El Universal, April 25 and 30, 2009. Articles by Silvia Otero and Notimex. El Diario de Juárez, April 25 and 29, 2009. Articles by Sandra Rodríguez Nieto, Gabriela Minjares and Alejandro Salmon. Cimacnoticias.com, April 28 and 29, 2009. Articles by Sandra Torres Pastrana, Nancy Betan, and editorial staff. Wola.org

AND ASH PONDS:

by Rachel Jennings



KING COAL IS NOT CLEAN COAL

Each culture has its geographical clichés. How many poets have compared the color and texture of the South Texas earth to a warm corn tortilla? Other poets, perhaps, see an abrasive, undulating landscape that resembles a molcajete. Such images are comforting and profoundly familiar, which is why most readers will not dismiss them as trite and unoriginal.

In Appalachia, over and over, poets compare the mountains to an old, warm quilt that shelters and protects the people of the hollers. Or the mountains are large, maternal breasts—a metaphor that creates an embarrassing image of Appalachians as shy children burrowing their faces into the cleft between the nurturing hills. The maternal breast image arouses within me a deep anxiety and uneasiness, since one hears Appalachians described far too often as “children,” for instance, in Diane Sawyer’s recent ABC documentary, *Children of the Mountains*, a well-intentioned but apolitical documentary dripping with stale stereotypes about Appalachian dysfunction and helplessness. Still, the mountain-as-quilt or mountain-as-maternal-breast metaphor is irresistible to most Appalachian people, whether they live in Pennsylvania or Kentucky or northern Georgia.

In 1978, however, riding across the Lewallen Bridge over the Clinch River in a yellow school bus, I saw the distant ridges of Oliver Springs and Roane County neither as quilts nor as breasts but as the enchanted, medieval landscape of Middle Earth. From base to crest, red rings encircled these ridges. In my thirteen-year-old mind, the rings resembled the magical mountain roads portrayed on the cover of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*. Actually, as John Byrd, an environmentalist, Vietnam veteran, and my eighth-grade science teacher, painstakingly informed us in his lectures, the rings were the very visible sign of strip mining, a method of mining for coal that eventually would destroy the ecosystem of the entire Appalachian mountain chain, the oldest mountains in the world. At the current rate of world consumption, he told us bluntly, the world supply of coal would be depleted within a hundred years. “Yeah, yeah, I know,” he sighed, world-weary. “Your mama and daddy love coal. So do your mamaw and papaw. You may have kinfolks who are coal miners, which is why everybody in this county just loves coal. It’s your way of life. By the time your grandchildren are grown, though, that coal will be gone. And so will the mountains.” Energy conservation and alternative energy resources, he said, were the only solutions to the problem. Not strip mining, which destroyed the very mountains we claimed to love.

Speaking before my junior high science class before the end of the Cold War, the rise of the personal computer or the Internet, or the emergence of global warming as an imminent

threat to the entire planet, Mr. Byrd may not have precisely pinned down the date for coal’s demise as a finite, nonrenewable energy resource. Someone can do a fact check in the year 2078. What Mr. Byrd clearly understood, however, was that strip mining was destroying Appalachia, including our

own neck of the woods in East Tennessee.

As Andrew Schissler explains in the *Encyclopedia of Earth*, “Strip mining is a type of surface mining that involves excavating earth, rock, and other material to uncover a . . . mineral reserve,” which is “usually coal.” Mining the coal or other minerals involves “explosives, draglines, bucketwheel excavators, stripping shovels, dozers, and other equipment.” The explosives and heavy equipment used in surface mining is highly damaging to the environment but requires much less labor in comparison with traditional coal mining. Coal miners descended from generations of coal mining families recognize that strip mining requires comparatively little skill and thus bears no relation to their proud labor traditions.

To be fair, strip mining is just one facet of a complex web of coal-related activity that threatens not just Appalachia but the entire earth. In recent years, mountaintop removal has expedited the destruction of the Appalachian mountain chain. The activist organization Mountain Justice describes mountaintop removal as “strip mining on steroids.” The website for another organization, I Love Mountains, describes mountaintop removal as “a radical form of coal mining in which entire mountains are literally blown up.” As their website points out, “Mountaintop removal is devastating hundreds of [square miles] of Appalachia; polluting the headwaters of rivers that provide drinking water to millions of Americans; and destroying a distinctly American culture that has endured for generations.” Another consequence of mountaintop removal, in fact, is the destruction of a natural drainage system for waters that typically flow from the mountains into rivers that flow eastward or southward into the Atlantic Ocean. Without this natural drainage system, both [drought and flooding] will occur in different regions of the nation.

When I think of mountaintop removal, I think of the slashing and gouging of the maternal breast—the home, the earth,

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which has been my nurturer and protector since childhood. While mountaintop removal is most prevalent in West Virginia and eastern Kentucky, people from elsewhere in Appalachia comprehend the tragic destruction of this horrific practice. As the group Appalachian Voices states, mountaintop removal is “one of the greatest and human rights catastrophes in American history” and “is underway just southwest of our nation’s capital. In the coalfields of Appalachia, individuals, families and entire communities are being driven off their land by flooding, landslides and blasting resulting from mountaintop removal coal mining.”

Under the Bush administration, regulations protecting the mountains from strip mining and mountaintop removal were repealed or ignored. Unfortunately, despite the urgent need to end the destruction wrought during the Bush years, the Obama administration has failed to act quickly and decisively. On Monday, June 15, 2009, the Obama administration announced a new plan to “regulate” mountaintop removal in Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. “Regulating” mountaintop removal, however, is akin to “regulating” the use of the atomic bomb. Once an atomic bomb detonates, masses of people suffer and die. Once explosives destroy a mountain, the mountain is gone forever. Nothing will bring the mountain back, certainly not red tape.

In addition to strip mining and mountaintop removal, coal ash retention ponds are another threat to Appalachia and indeed the nation. On December 22, 2008, while visiting my parents to celebrate Christmas, I learned from the nightly TV news of a massive spill of coal ash from just such a slurry pond in Kingston, Tennessee. As Kelly Hearn writes in the June 12, 2009, issue of The Nation, the coal ash spill triggered “a billion-gallon mudslide that knocked houses off foundations and roiled into the Emory River.” Despite denials by Tennessee political leaders and officials of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), a federal agency dating back to the New Deal of the 1930s,

the federally funded utility responsible for the spill, scrambled to allay fears, studies have found lead, arsenic, and other poisons and carcinogens in local soil and water sources, including not the Emory River but also the Clinch River, the same river I crossed so

many years ago as I headed to the junior high school. The coal ash retention ponds, of course, are located not only in Appalachia but anywhere in the United States where hydroelectric power is produced through the burning of coal. The retention ponds are so numerous and so dangerous that the Department of Homeland Security has classified their locations as secret because enemies of the U.S. might choose them as easy bombing targets to cause maximum damage to local populations.

Still, I suspect, the people of Appalachia are particularly vulnerable to coal ash spills, since the TVA relies so heavily on coal to produce cheap power for the region. Moreover, the TVA has national political and economic clout, making it difficult to demand accountability. Because the TVA was founded during the Roosevelt administration as a means of providing electricity to a rural, impoverished region, many political progressives find it distasteful to criticize TVA practices. Perhaps these progressives would be less worshipful if they understood the environmental damage wrought by TVA’s reliance on coal. If TVA provides relatively cheap electric power, it does so by buying an unavoidably dirty, polluting fuel source. Although the coal burned by TVA no longer pollutes the air at the levels seen fifty years ago, this relative lack of air pollution comes at a price: the coal ash retention ponds, which trap the pollutants by mixing them with water and pumping them into the huge ponds. Moreover, TVA historically has often bought coal from non-union mines and from corporations that engage in strip mining and mountaintop removal. Ultimately, TVA exists to further the interests of capitalist corporations more than to help poor people.

As I think of the web of destruction wrought by coal and capitalism in Appalachia, I mourn for my beautiful mountains, the soft old quilt of my imagination, the constant maternal presence in my spirit. Viewing the mountains as a feminine presence is an essentialist gesture and may seem problematic in its clichéd equation of femininity with violation and victimization. The mountains, however, are not inherently places of violation. To the contrary, the mountains represent strength and permanence. The mountains are not weak but rather the capitalist predators who seem helpless in the face of their own greed and avarice.

Some people may be surprised by the vehemence with which I criticize the coal industry, since coal mining is so central to Appalachian identity. Coal mining, nevertheless, has always been environmentally destructive. Worse, since its origins in the region, coal mining has resulted in countless coal miner deaths and injuries. Coal miners who have unionized have faced harassment and violence. Moreover, in coal counties, the people of Appalachia do not own their ancestral lands. Coal companies do. Even if one accepts the nostalgic vision of a noble Appalachian coal mining past, one must recognize that the coal mining traditions of bygone days have vanished forever. Truly, there is no such thing as clean coal. ■

*Bio: Rachel Jennings was born and raised in East Tennessee. She has recently published a book of poetry, *Elijah’s Farm*, with Pecan Grove Press.*



Charlotte Spitzer Robin Kessler and her partner, Mary Kinney, members of the Esperanza community who now live in Baltimore, Maryland, informed us that Robin’s mother, Charlotte Spitzer, passed away peacefully on May 27, 2009 in California surrounded by family and friends. Charlotte was a lifelong activist, world traveler and avid reader. A memorial service will take place July 12, 2009 in Santa Cruz County in Northern California. Contact Robin at robdkess@msn.com or call 831. 684.0506 for details. We extend our sympathy to Robin and her loved ones at this time of transition. Abrazos.

by Anoni Ma

What is Love?



One in five female high school students has reported being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.

Forty-three percent of teens reported that the violence occurred on school grounds.

In Texas, one out of every two teens reported experiencing dating violence.

from Austin, Texas, stabbed his girlfriend six times in the head, neck, and back in a hallway during school hours. Ortralla Mosley died shortly afterwards from the wounds; she was only fifteen years old. Marcus was a star running back at his high school, and the last person anyone ever thought would commit murder. When he met Carolyn Mosley, Ortralla's mother, for the first time, he made an outstanding impression. Mosley stated, "He was a very good young man. He had his life organized to where he thought he was on the right road. I really thought they would make a very, very, very good couple" ("Tragic

According to Texas Family Code 71.0021, dating violence is defined as "an act by an individual that is against another individual with whom that person has or has had a dating relationship and that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault or that is a threat that reasonably places the individual in fear of imminent [...] harm."

Cases of teen dating violence are rising at alarming rates. Many teen girls do not report the violent abuse they are subjected to out of fear of being hurt again, so these official statistics may be lower than the actual numbers. Nonetheless, these numbers are exceedingly high and must be addressed quickly. House Bill 121 does that for Texas teens. Passed by the Senate on May 3, 2007, with a unanimous vote, the bill requires every Texas school district to adopt and implement a dating-violence policy. The requirements of this bill include: a definition of dating violence, addressing safety planning, enforcing protective orders, offering school-based alternatives to protective orders, training teachers and administration, offer counseling for the affected students, and including awareness education for both students and parents.

House Bill 121 was signed into law on May 18, 2007, by Governor Perry. The bill is mandated for all school districts and declared effective immediately upon signing. As a result of this bill, Texas should expect to see the number of abused teens decrease drastically. Teens need to feel safe not only in their homes, but also in school. H.B. 121 helps keep that safety net open and available for high school students.

There has been little, if any, opposition to the bill due to the severity of the matter. However, it is common for parents of young male teens to insist their sons would never harm a girlfriend. The truth is it happens every

day.

On March 28, 2003, a teen by the name of Marcus McTear

Tale of Teen Dating Violence").

In time, Marcus' true colors came to light as a previous girlfriend, Rae Ann Spence, began to talk openly about her relationship with the football star. Rae Ann and Ortralla both experienced similar behavior at the hands of Marcus, and both suffered through the vicious cycle of dating violence while in a relationship with him. Unfortunately, both let the abuse continue without reporting it; one tragically ended up paying with her life. These two young girls are two of many who have suffered abuse during school hours. In the article, "Tragic Tale of Teen Dating Violence," Rae Ann Spence reports having been punched in the arm, pushed down stairs, bitten on the cheek, smacked with a notebook, put in a head lock and punched repeatedly, and even having her backpack set on fire by Marcus. H.B. 121 helps ensure that young girls who are being abused will be protected, especially if they attend the same school as their abuser.

Currently in Texas, you can obtain a protective order against someone you date or have previously dated, and can ask that the abuser stay away from your school. Under policies set by H.B. 121, if a protective order has already been obtained and is in effect, the school must hold separate meetings with the victim and perpetrator to clarify the expectations and review the school day for both, paying close attention to possible contact between the victim and abuser. According to "A Guide to Addressing Dating Violence in Texas Schools," if the possibility of any face-to-face contact between the two exists, "the burden for any bus, classroom or other schedule changes should be on the alleged perpetrator, not the victim." Anyone over the age of eighteen can obtain a protective order, but teens under the age of eighteen must have an adult file on their behalf. This can cause problems for some underage teens, as they feel embarrassed or ashamed to report the abuse. So what makes lawmakers think the abused teen will ask for help in obtaining a protective order? This is

where H.B. 121's effectiveness comes into play.

School-based alternatives can be offered to teens in lieu of obtaining a protective order through a judge. The most common alternative offered to students is a Stay-Away Agreement. This provides a list of conditions to be followed by the abuser while on school grounds and at school-sponsored activities. The following can be included in the agreement: a description of the relationship; a description of the violence that has occurred; a list of actions the abuser must not commit; any changes made to the abuser's schedule; dates when the agreement is in effect, when it will be reviewed; disciplinary consequences that will follow any violations; the signatures of the abuser/an administrator/a parent or guardian of the abuser.

• • •

I suffered through the same cycle of abuse that Rae Ann Spence and Ortralla Mosley suffered. However, I was lucky: I have never been abused as badly as either one of them. Nonetheless, any abuse is unacceptable, whether it is physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional. I made excuses for my boyfriend when he yelled at me, let it slide when he'd pull or push me around by my jacket or shirt, and believed him when he said it wouldn't happen again after the first time he hit me. Despite all the warnings of his friends and ex-girlfriend, I continued the relationship. I felt determined to be the one to cure him of his bad habits. I knew he was strong and could crush me in an instant, but I found it comforting to know he could, and would, do anything to protect me.

Eventually his protective side turned to possessiveness, jealousy, and anger. If I did not do exactly what he told me to do or opposed him in anyway, he would get mad and yell at me. One night, we were sitting in his truck, outside of my house, having yet another argument about something he said I'd done wrong. His yelling turned into a rage I hadn't seen in him since he was in a fight almost a year beforehand.

Then he hit me.

After begging and pleading with me not to leave him, I decided to stay. A week or two later, as we were leaving campus to eat lunch, he hit me again. But this time it was not just once or twice; he hit me enough to make me black-out for at least a minute. I kicked him back in defense, and he hit me harder. Surprisingly, I went back to school thirty minutes later with no bruises or marks, just a puffy, red face from all the crying during the attack.

After this incident, I finally broke up with him for good. He continued to stalk me for a month or two afterwards. He threatened to kill himself if I didn't take him back, but I knew he wouldn't do such a thing, so I stayed strong. He began to threaten me once he realized I wasn't going to succumb to his begging. I didn't tell my friends, until weeks later, what actually happened between us. To this day, I have not told my parents what he did to me. I was scared to get help because I didn't want to be hit again for trying to leave. I never felt the courage or strength to go to an adult for help, so I understand why many girls don't get the help they need

and deserve.

If a program, such as the ones set forth by H.B. 121, had been implemented while I was in school, I would have definitely taken advantage of it and protected myself from my abuser. This issue is very close to my heart, as my life has now been permanently affected by dating violence. I fully support House Bill 121 and everything it has set in place for school districts in Texas.

Teens need to know they are safe in school, even when the danger is lurking in their immediate surroundings. I know many parents don't believe their male teenagers would harm any female, let alone someone he is supposed to love, but the numbers speak loudly. One out of two Texas teens is one teen too many to be affected by violence. We need to do everything we can to prevent more abuse among teens in Texas. It is up to us, as a community, to prevent senseless deaths, such as the death of Ortralla Mosley. As Rae Ann Spence stated, "I feel like now I'm not just living for me, I'm living for [Ortralla]. I'm going to keep her spirit alive the best I can. And I'm going to talk about this as much as I can. And make sure it doesn't happen again."

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Editor's note: This article was written for a class in a local university in San Anontio. The author chose to remain anonymous.

LA VOZ DE ESPERANZA · JULY/AUGUST 2009 VOL. 22 ISSUE 6

MAGICAL XICANA REALISM

A Review of *Falling Angels: Cuentos y Poemas* by Olga García Echeverría.

San Diego, CA. Calaca Press and Chibcha Press. 2008.

by Suyapa Portillo Villeda, CFD Fellow Pomona College

Falling Angels: Cuentos y Poemas by Olga García Echeverría is a fantastic literary journey through East Los Angeles, Northern Mexico and the *punte migratorio* in between the two. García Echeverría extends a bridge between the code-switching traditions of Chicana Literature with its focus on raw everyday life and the magical realist tradition of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende and other Latin American storytellers. This review is titled *Magical Xicana Realism* to highlight the melding of these two genres into a third genre introduced by recent poets and a product of migration. The use of both English and Spanish, and the code-switching in the text, contest traditional genres in printed literature and mirror a storytelling tradition of the Latino community in East Los Angeles. These stories bear witness to daily injustices faced by people in working class neighborhoods and also highlight the agency of the characters.

García Echeverría, a daughter of Mexican immigrants, was raised straddling the memory of Mexico and the reality of home in East Los Angeles. Twenty-two poems and six short stories tell an intimate story of growing up, coming of age, rebellion and survival.

García Echeverría's book often tells the stories of young women heroines and friendships. For example, the young women in "Falling Angels," the story that titles the book, are ying and yang; it is a pairing full of banter that for the girls both provides witness for their lives and a duality of self, a sort of coupling that brings about a whole. As they come of age and question the religious doctrines that confine them, they are each other's sidekick and alter ego.

García Echeverría writes of friendships and camaraderie but also of self-discovery. *Vuelo*, three poems with the same title, depicts distinctly female flights--imaginary, emotional and physical. Freedom is masked here in a hue of sadness and a seductive desire. There are also several haikus dedicated to women greats of Latin America, Rosario Castellanos, Alfonsina Storni and Gabriela Mistral, bold women who constructed worlds of expression at the margins of expected gender roles.

The short stories in the book have a real time, real world feeling to them. The raw, oral tone works to suspend the absurdity and magic of unreal events that are emotionally and politically charged.

The key to the stories is a whimsical exaggeration and exacerbation of the contradictions in society. For instance, in the story "Con el Nopal en la Frente," García Echeverría depicts the homecoming of Tránsito, a man in his thirties who is ashamed of his roots. As a result of this shame, Tránsito develops the unusual problem of growing an

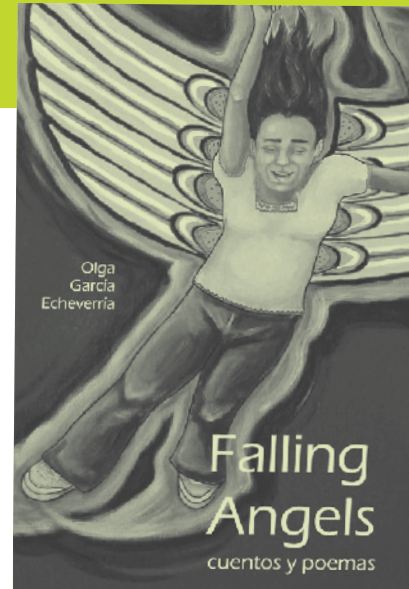
actual *nopal* or cactus on his forehead. The unfortunate incident puts him in the kitchen, with mother and *nina* (his godmother) who nip at his growing and flowering cacti, enthusiastically exchanging recipes. The magical quality of this story leads the protagonist and reader to understand the importance of one's own identity and to acknowledge the impacts of one's inner shame. Tránsito's cactus allows him to connect with parts of his childhood now lost, hidden or simply suppressed to fit into U.S. American society.

Significantly, the story takes place in the kitchen, a space where one rarely finds Chicano men in literature.

The key to the stories is a whimsical exaggeration and exacerbation of the contradictions in society.

Although the role of the mother in this story is normative, as holder of tradition and good recipes in the kitchen, her character's pleasure in "nipping" at her son's cactus is subversive of the typical nurturing role. She does not try to solve the problem or help her son find a doctor. There is a de-masculinization of the Mexican "sell out," a shaming as his mother and godmother eat his parts and glorify his ability to produce cacti, a basic Mexican staple. In the end, it is not Tránsito's Anglo education that serves to provide food on the table, a normative male expectation for Mexican families, but rather his roots, the resilient *nopal*.

The story "Assault with a Deadly Donut" exemplifies unincorporated working class East Los Angeles, a community with a historically important role in the development of urban Los Angeles. It is a city within a global first world city, complete with cultural and political borders and an informal economy that helps people subsist while they live under heavy police



cont'd on pg 20...

I'm puzzled by the war of words that pits creationism against evolution. As a biologist, I see the theory of evolution to be the synthesis of our knowledge about living things on the planet. But, my experiences as a human being have given me a view of reality that includes both the natural world and the spiritual world.

A QUAKER SCIENTIST VIEWS EVOLUTION AND CREATION



by Ruth Lofgren, Ph.D.

I am alive and conscious with a body, mind and spirit. Of the three only the body, as a part of the natural world, can be studied scientifically. After thousands of years of pondering and decades of very specialized research on the functioning of the living brain, the nature of mind and consciousness is still a mystery!

The natural world is all around us with its amazing diversity of plants and animals. Each of us recognizes the plants in our gardens, our pets and the people around us, the earth and sky, sun, moon and stars. Ancient astronomers made records of their observations and constructed a model to illustrate their ideas. It had the earth in the center with the sun and planets revolving around it. As better instruments led to more accurate measurements, astronomers revised the model. The current model has the sun in the center of our solar system with all the planets revolving around it. General acceptance of this "new" model has taken centuries!

Our everyday experiences tell us that the earth is more or less flat and that the sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening. Isn't that going around the earth? Our senses tell us so! But with scientific methods, models of the wider natural world that include earth's place in the Milky Way Galaxy have been made. It is the nature of science that the more we learn, the more questions arise. There are no final answers as the quest to understand the natural world continues.

When I was young I had a strong, healthy body and was conscious with an active mind. I took it all for granted! What a gift to be able to learn, to understand, to remember, to imagine, to analyze and solve problems, to design and create objects we want! We can think of past or future, near or far and instantly be there in our minds. By contrast, in the natural world it is always now! Past is gone, and we must wait for the future. Also, it takes time and

energy to travel from one place to another. Mind and consciousness are familiar, but they are still mysteries!

All of us are philosophers as we ponder questions like: How did it all begin? Where did matter and energy come from? How did life begin? Why are we here? Is there purpose in life? Over the past five or ten thousand years, the stories people have told each other in explaining day and night, thunder and lightning, birth and death, etc. have become the myths of their cultures. The prophets, seers, mystics and wise people of each group have contributed richly to the stories that are accepted beliefs.

Those of us who are not mystics may be inspired by the revelations of a particular prophet or seer and accept his or her teachings on faith. They feel true to us. But since the stories of creation and teachings vary from one prophet to another and are modified over the centuries by wise men's interpretations, disagreements, persecutions and wars continue. The human family seems to be fragmented into groups loyal to one story or another, with some individuals who are uncomfortable with any mystical story or who may have created their own.

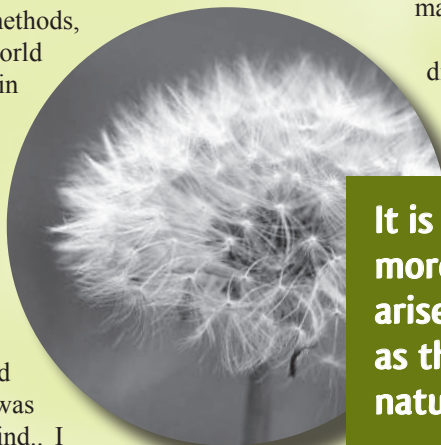
I am not a mystic, so I have accepted teachings that feel true to me. George Fox, the mystic who founded Quakerism, taught that there is that of God in each person. He was a student of the Bible, but Fox's question to each of us is, "What canst thou say?" We can be our own ministers. If we wait in silence, alone or in meeting, the still small voice will lead us. This appeals to me! And I found the same instructions in Buddhism. Teachings should not be accepted unless they are borne out by our experience and are praised by the wise. Also, there is no intermediary between mankind and the divine.

From my childhood in a Mormon community, I accepted the divine world as a part of the whole. I believe that I am a child of God, that the body is the temple of the spirit, that the glory of God is intelligence and that man is that he might have joy.

Also, my grandfather had the power of healing. He healed me.

Edgar Cayce, a 20th century mystic,

It is the nature of science that the more we learn, the more questions arise. There are no final answers as the quest to understand the natural world continues.



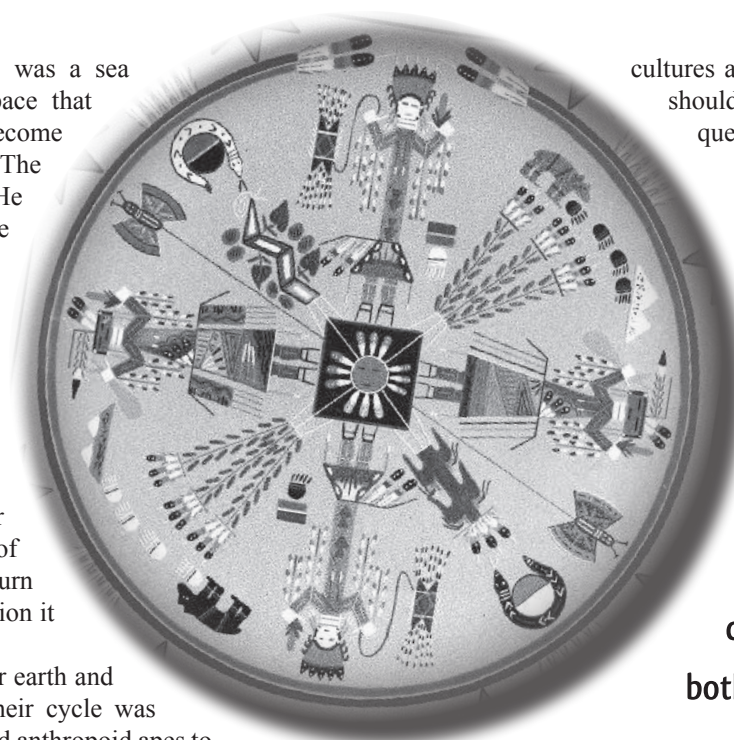
revealed an interesting story of creation. It is described in The Story of Edgar Cayce, THERE IS A RIVER by Thomas Sugrue, in the section on Philosophy. Sugrue describes Cayce's metaphysical readings as "a Christianized version of the mystery religions of ancient Egypt, Caldea, Persia, India, and Greece."

In Cayce's story there was a sea of spirit that filled all space that withdrew into itself to become a restless, seething mind. The awakened spirit was God. He desired companionship. He projected from himself the cosmos and souls. The plan for the soul was a cycle of experience to know creation in all aspects at the discretion of the will. The cycle would be completed when the desire of the will was no longer different from the thought of God, and the soul would return to its source as the companion it was intended to be.

A way for souls to enter earth and experience it as part of their cycle was made by souls who modified anthropoid apes to become different from the simple animals they had been.

"They came down out of the trees, built fires, made tools, lived in communities and began to communicate with each other. ...They lost their animal look, shed bodily hair, and took on refinements of manner and habit" When the body of the ape was modified to fit the soul's objective, "the soul descended into the body and the earth had a new inhabitant: man."

I find Cayce's story of how individual spirits and souls were created to be as interesting as the story of creation in the Bible. Cayce describes how human beings evolved, with a natural world already there, while the Book of Genesis gives a very brief account of the whole of creation. In Chapter 1 of Genesis, the story of creation, compiled long ago, does not put events in a sequence consistent with current science. For example, "Let there be light" is in verse 4, Grass and seed-bearing plants appears in verse 11, while the seasons come in verse 14 and the sun and moon in verse 16, and so on. I still think it's a beautiful story. Imagine how many stories of creation must exist in the myriad



cultures around the world. And none of them should be used as a reference for answering questions in biology.

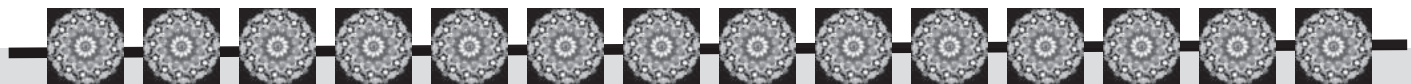
Differences of opinion about the natural world can be resolved by

We might find that the differences in beliefs are not as important in causing conflicts as are social injustices such as slavery, exploitation, power and control and lack of respect, both locally and internationally.

continuing scientific investigation. It may take a while, as it has with global warming. But, when people use beliefs to justify conflict, oppression and killing, we need to better understand the basic causes of social conflict. We might find that the differences in beliefs are not as important in causing conflicts as are social injustices such as slavery, exploitation, power and control and lack of respect, both locally and internationally.

In this global age, when people's strongly held differences of opinions and beliefs are so often the justification for conflict, oppression and killing, we need to reaffirm our commitment to UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS. It takes a broad view to see that someone else has a right to his opinion even though it looks wrong to me (from my point of view). We ought to be able to agree to disagree rather than insist that only one opinion survive, that the losers either recant or die.

Bio: Ruth Lofgren came to San Antonio by way of Utah, Michigan and New York City to teach in a Quaker School. She has served on environmental and community task forces and is a strong advocate for conservation, peace and justice.



.... pg 18 *Magical Xicana realism cont'd* surveillance. When Turo travels to Laguna Beach to deliver his customized Mexican donuts for the rich, he becomes a border crosser in the same city! As a border crosser, Turo's presence disrupts the pristine first world myth of Laguna Beach, complete with its manicured lawns and police vigilance. Because he is an outsider, Turo is mistaken for a dangerous intruder and is shot for supposedly assaulting an officer with a chocolate donut. The absurdity of Turo's donut assault is a direct critique of the outrageous justifications sometimes used to excuse police brutality.

Rather than becoming a victim, Turo turns his shooting into an opportunity to spread the word against injustice. He creates a giant collage made up of community testimonies on his donut truck. These testimonies echo the community's outcries against police brutality. In the end it is not only Turo, but rather the entire community, that is actually *contando cuentos*, storytelling and passing on lessons to be careful, to survive.

The desire for agency in one's life is the central theme in *Falling Angels*. This book speaks to a diverse intergenerational audience, in English and Spanish as well as Spanglish, dramatically subverting language norms in traditional academics. At the same time it is a critique of space and an illumination and subversion roles of young women.

The book's creative invention, physical and temporal, brings us a selection of lush images that tantalize the tongue and brain alike. This carefully woven book has emotional depth and brings together genres that expand geographically from Latin America to Southern California and the Southwest. The youthful and refreshing voice really explodes in the short stories, while the poems bring resiliency and depth.

Bio: Suyapa Portillo Villeda is currently teaching at Pomona College. Her areas of interest and activism include LGBTQI movements in Latin America, immigration and labor organizing issues.

Gracias

El Mundo Zurdo: An Art Exhibit on the Life and Theories of Gloria Anzaldúa was made possible by the hard work of a dedicated and loving community. Lead curator, Anel I. Flores and the Curatorial Committee would like to thank all participants who contributed their time, arte, and communal spirit to the creation of the exhibit as a component to the El Mundo Zurdo Conference. Thank you from the bottom of our corazones! - Lisa D. Anaya, Curatorial Committee



Artwork: Maricela Olguin

El Mundo Zurdo Artists

* also part of Curatorial Committee

Adriana García • Alma Gómez-Frith • Anel I. Flores * • Antonio Ceniseros • Ari Chagoya • Carolina Rubio • Carolina Flores • Celeste De Luna • Cruz Ortiz • David Zamora Casas • Dolores Zapata Murff * • Eric T. Cavazos * • Fabiola Torralba * • Gabriel Delgado • Genevive Rodríguez • Grace Barraza-Vega • Guillermina Zabala • Jessica Mosqueda • Josh T. Franco & Elyse Harary • Kamala Platt • Lahib Jaddo • Leticia Reyna • Liliana Wilson • Lisa D. Anaya * • Loretta Medellín • Maria Luisa Carvajal Vasconcellos • Mary Agnes Rodríguez • Patricia Trujillo * • Raquel Valle-Senties • Raul Castellanos Villarreal III

• Rebecca Cervantes • Salwa Arnous • Soledad Marta Hernández Baez • Stacy Berlfein • Tina Hernández • Veronica Castillo

Curatorial Committee Mary Cantú • Amanda Haas • Gloria Ramírez • and artists as indicated above (*)

Esperanza Peace and Justice Center | **Buena Gente and Staff** *

Sandra S. Anzaldúa-Jones • Rusty Barceló • Norma Cantú • Antonia Castañeda • Veronica Castillo • Yasmina Codina • Brenda Davis • Lupita Dominguez • Nick Flores • Norma Flores • Adriana García • Marisa González • Jessica O. Guerrero * • Amanda Haas * • Daisy Hernández • Ana Louise Keating • Jim Kitchen • Loretta Young Medellín • Raven Medina • Josie Méndez Negrete • Angie Merla • Catie Merla Watson • Maricela Olguin • Antonia Padilla • Elise Peña • Cynthia Pérez • Nasrin Piri • Gloria A. Ramírez • Genevieve Rodríguez • Mary Agnes Rodríguez • René Saenz * • Graciela Sánchez * • Terry Schneider • Stephanie Shelton • Manuel Solis * • Cynthia Spielman • Monica Velásquez * • Andrea Vince

EL MUNDO ZURDO



Artwork: Las Tortolitas del Rio Grande, Alma Gomez-Frith

VISUAL ART EXHIBIT

on the life and work of Gloria E. Anzaldúa
ESPERANZA PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

ON EXHIBIT THROUGH JULY

GALLERY HOURS | TUESDAY - FRIDAY 10AM-7PM

CALL 210.228.0201 FOR WEEKEND HOURS

Exploring the writings and theories of Tejana, chicana, lesbian, feminist, poet, writer and cultural theorist, Gloria E. Anzaldúa, the El Mundo Zurdo exhibit reflects Anzaldúa's concepts of border-crossing, borderlands, sexuality, education, spirituality, queer identity, Meztizaje, and Nepantla.

Amnesty International #127 meets on 4th Thurs at 7:30 pm at Ashbury United Methodist. Call 829-0397.

Anti-War Peace Vigil every Thurs. 4-6pm. In front of City Hall Bldg @ Flores & Commerce. veteransforpeace.org | ivaw.org

Bexar County Green Party Contact info@bexargreens.org or call (210)471-1791 for more.

Critical Mass Bicycle ride!! Meet @ N. St. Mary's & Mulberry Ave the last Friday of every month at 5:30 pm, rain or shine. mspace.com/satxcriticalmass

DIGNITY S.A. holds mass Sundays at 5:15 pm at St. Ann's. Call 735-7191.

The S.A. Free Speech Coalition meets at 6:30pm on 1st Wednesdays @ La Esperanza. Call 210.228.0201, www.esperanza-center/freespeech

Fuerza Unida is at 710 New Laredo Hwy. Call 927-2297.

Habitat for Humanity holds Orientation on 1st Tuesdays at 1st Presbyterian Church, 404N. Alamo, Rm 302 at 6 pm.

Parents/Friends of Lesbians/Gays (PFLAG) meets 1st Thursdays at 7pm @ 121 W. Woodlawn. Call 655-2383.

Proyecto Hospitalidad Liturgy meets on Thursdays at 7 pm at 325 Courtland. Call 736-3579.

The Rape Crisis Center is at 7500 US Hwy 90 W., Bldg 2 in SA. Hotline number is 210.349-7273. Call 210/521-7273 or Drominishi@rapecrisis.com

San Antonio Healthcare Now Coalition meets 1st Thurs. at 6:30 pm @ **National Nurses**

Organizing Committee office 7959 Fredericksburg Rd. Call 882-2230 or check: www.healthcarenowsa.org

San Antonio NOW meets 4th Wed @ La Madeline on Broadway @ 6:30pm. Call: 673-8600

The Shambhala Buddhist Meditation Center offers classes on Tues./Thurs. at 7pm, Sun. at 11:30 am. at 1114 So. St. Mary's. Call 222-9303.

The Society of Friends meets Sun. at 10 am at The Friends Meeting House, 7052 N. Van-diver. Call 945-8456.

The Society of Latino and Hispanic Writers SA meets 2nd Mondays, 7 pm @ Barnes & Noble, San Pedro Crossing.

S.N.A.P. (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) meets 2nd Sat. of each month at 1pm at 1443 S. St. Mary's. Call 725-8329.

Voice for Animals meets last Sat. at Whole Foods in the Quarry @ 3 pm. Call 737-3138 or see www.voiceforanimals.org

For **Texas Media Empowerment Project** info contact: deannec@texasmep.org

Metropolitan Community Church of SA (MCCSA), 611 East Myrtle has services and Sunday School @ 10:30 AM. Call: 599-9289.

The Solidarity Support Group meets M-F @ 5802 S. Presa. Call Janet @ 582-8776 or Leo @ 436-8018x307.

San Antonio Gender Assoc. meets 1st & 3rd Thursdays, 6-9pm at 611 E. Myrtle, Metropolitan Community Church, downstairs. www.sagender.org

The **ESPERANZA PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER** is part of *Community Shares of Texas*

Sign-up to donate monthly to the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center [agency # 8670] directly from your paycheck at work through these AWTS participants:

In San Antonio:

(San Antonio Area)

- State Employee Charitable Campaign (#074572)
- San Antonio Combined Federal Campaign
- City of San Antonio Local Charitable Campaign
- Bexar County Employees Local Charitable Campaign
- San Antonio Combined School District Charitable Campaign
- San Antonio Water System Local Charitable Campaign

Outside of San Antonio:

- Central Texas Combined Federal Campaign (Austin area)
- City of Austin Combined Charities Campaign (#1526)
- Travis County Combined Charities Campaign
- City of Houston Combined Municipal Campaign
- Houston ISD Combined Charities Campaign
- City of El Paso Combined Charitable Campaign
- County of El Paso Combined Charitable Campaign

And, all of Community Shares of Texas campaigns in the private sector.

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PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER***
*Call us at 210.228.0201
to sign up with our electronic direct deposit program,
or to access employment site codes.

TO ADD YOUR GROUP'S MEETING DATES OR TO MAKE CHANGES contact lavoz@esperanzacenter.org or call the Esperanza Center at 210.228.0201.

Make a tax-deductible donation.

I would like to donate \$ _____ /month by automatic bank withdrawal. Contact me to sign up.

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- ___ \$50
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- ___ \$30 La Voz subscription / \$100 Institutions
- ___ \$10
- ___ other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone Number _____

I would like to volunteer!

Please use my donation for the Rinconcito de Esperanza

for more info call 210.228.0201
Make checks payable to the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center. Send to 922 San Pedro, SA TX 78212. Donations to the Esperanza are tax deductible.

Notas Y Más

July/August 2009

Brief notes to inform La Voz readers about events, issues and happenings in the community. Send announcements for Notas y Más to: lavoz@esperanzacenter.org or by mail to: 922 San Pedro, San Antonio, TX 78212. The deadline is the 10th of each month.

The Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS) announces its Writing Workshops for the **2009 MALCS Summer Institute** at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces campus, July 22-25. Workshops offered are *The Testimonio and the Personal Voice in Critical Essay Writing* facilitated by Dr. Tiffany Ana López who can be contacted at Tiffany.lopez@ucr.edu and *The Academic Article* facilitated by Dr. Karen Mary Davalos who can be contacted at kdavalos@lmu.edu. **Deadline** to apply is **July 1st**. See <http://malcs.nmsu.edu> for more info.

The National Association of Latino Arts and Culture Fund for the Arts (NALAC) is accepting applications for grants of up to \$20,000 awarded to support the development and work of individual Latino artists and small to mid-sized Latino arts groups. **Deadline: July 13, 2009**. Contact www.nalac.org for details. NALAC has the new *Transnational Cultural Remittances Grant Program* that will provide grants of up to \$20,000 to individuals, collectives, and community-

based groups working to strengthen social networks and economic justice across national boundaries in Central America. **Deadline: July 24, 2009**. Contact www.nalac.org for details.

Conjunto Heritage Taller will hold a benefit on July 25th featuring music by *Los Fantasma del Valle* and *Los TexManiacs* at Plaza Maverick in La Villita. Tickets can be purchased for \$6 at the **Conjunto Heritage Taller** office or, purchase tickets at **Janie's Record Shop** at 135 Bandera Rd. Contact them at: 210-212-8560 or conjunto.h.taller@sbcglo.net

The Mayborn Literary Non Fiction Conference for the written word will be held for the 5th year this July 24-26 in Grapevine, Texas. Keynote speakers will be Alma Guillermoprieto, Ira Glass and Paul Theroux. Scholarships for minority students are available. Check www.themayborn.com for details.

The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans support 30 individuals a

year for up to 2 years of graduate study in any subject anywhere in the U.S. Students already in graduate study are eligible, though not past their 2nd year. The fellowships provide \$20,000 in maintenance and half tuition wherever the fellow attends. Candidates must be either holders of Green Cards, naturalized citizens, or children of two naturalized citizen parents. **Application Deadline: November 1, 2009**. Contact **Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans** at 212-547-6926 or www.pdsoros.org

Mexico Solidarity Network offers courses for the Fall 2009, September 6 - December 12: Study in Chiapas, Tlaxcala and Mexico City, focusing on the theory and practice of Mexican social movements, including indigenous movements, campesino organizations, and urban movements. Check mexicosolidarity.org



The 21st Century Chicano Activist Reunion will take place August 21-23, 2009 in Dallas, Tejazztlán. Check www.dallaschicanoconvention.org

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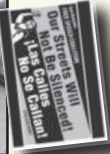
Canciones de Flores, Frutas, Hierbas...
Sabiduría de nuestros antepasados

Wed. July, 8th
8 pm

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S.A. FREE SPEECH COALITION



Gente! Stop by the Esperanza and pick up the new **Free Speech mini booklet** and continue distributing flyers, gathering signatures, making announcements, doing research and **TALKING TO EVERYONE** about this local/global struggle against silencing dissent!

Next Meeting:
July 1st
6:30pm at
Esperanza



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