

FROM:

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CHAPTER 1

Anguished Past, Troubled Present
The Savagery and Promise of Traumatic Memory

For most of my childhood, my father was a ghost. I loved and feared him for many reasons, and never knew when he would appear or disappear. Nor could I predict whether his brief presence would be kind or cruel. I have come to believe that he has always hated the Mexican in him. Though his parents did not speak English, he sometimes claims not to understand Spanish. Some of my siblings have also learned this self-loathing, refusing to speak to their grandparents, anglicizing their names as my father did, and reluctantly admitting only to Spanish blood. Since he and my mother were divorced, he has remarried several times, always choosing blonde women. Now in his seventies, he tells people that his first wife was also blonde. In doing so, he erases my mother from his past. I take no pleasure in revealing this. I want my father to be like Edward James Olmos in the movies. I want him to be *el hijo de mi abuelita*—the son of my Mexican Indian grandmother—but I know this will never be. He prefers to tell people the romantic story that my grandmother was the daughter of a very wealthy Spanish family in Mexico City, and that my grandfather kidnapped her. They came to the United States to escape the wrath and vengeance of her father who disapproved of their match. They chose love over wealth. Two birds, one stone. With this story, my father slips out from under the stigma of having a dark-skinned mother *and* of being poor. The impoverished Mexican has been beaten and shamed out of him. No amount of political rhetoric from me can bring it back.

Though shame-based behaviors are manifest in individual lives and ultimately the healing must be done by individuals, it is important to remember the historical source and ongoing impetus for this dysfunction. It

is to be found in the practices of conquest, colonization, a concept of private ownership, and economic systems that thrive on inequality. It is also in various social processes that work in support of these hierarchical structures. These things function at all levels, dictating who is at the top and who is at the bottom of the global market, nation-state, corporation, community, worksite, and interpersonal relationships. Thus, social science studies, which focus on pathology within the subordinate community, cannot be helpful in imagining solutions to national or worldwide problems. They do not take into account the day-to-day pressures and tensions activated at the historical or macroeconomic level. Nor do these studies acknowledge the concrete damage done to the individual psyche by things wholly outside individual control.

Knowing the history of North America from the period of its indigenous civilizations through the destruction caused by conquest and colonization has helped many people to develop ethnic loyalty. Learning how this past has led to the nationalist eras of modern Mexico and the United States is an important part of understanding the cultural context that could produce both fierce pride in me and the kind of shame my father exhibits. But simply learning the dates and names or the geographical locations of that history does not enlighten us about its effect on the human soul. Our ancestors suffered the events and devastating displacements of that history, and we continue to experience its legacy, though our responses to it are much different. Through hundreds of years of upheaval, they fought—we fight—to survive. This constant state of struggle and endurance leaves little time to indulge in a ritualistic or communal grieving process for all that we have lost through imperialist processes. Our political rhetoric does not always reveal the scars we carry in our hearts heavy with this history, but our literature tells the story. *Chicana Studies.*

I first saw my father's pain and psychic damage replicated in the book *Hunger for Memory*. I had little patience with Richard Rodríguez's autobiographical narrative, which brought out all the anger I felt at my father for not being a proud Chicano. I hated Rodríguez for the way he spoke about his parents and their Mexicanness, but it was really my experiences with my father that inspired the passionate outrage with which I critiqued *Hunger for Memory*. Once in college and majoring in Chicano studies, I found texts that gave voice to a different kind of Chicana/o identity. Yet even in these new forms of defiant expression, the pain did not dissipate, nor did the shame entirely disappear. In analyzing this literature, I could never quite put into words what I wanted to say about this collective sense of being wounded. Each time I tried, I would be accused of "essentializing" Chicana/o experience. Yet I knew that for all the unconditional love, laughter, and joy among my friends and family, there was also profound sadness and shame.

Conventional scholarship and existing theories proved inadequate. Historical research disclosed many things about which I could express anger, but could not tell me how people responded emotionally to given events. Literary analysis has been a remarkable tool for uncovering hidden messages and discovering meaning beyond the obvious signification. Cultural studies, feminist theory, and Marxist analysis have revealed the camouflaged socioeconomic function of exclusionary practices based on race, class, gender, and sexual identity. Philosophical inquiry has yielded both simple and complex ways of conceptualizing social dynamics, intercultural relationships, and literary production.

Though I use these tools, some piece of the scar has always been missing. It seems clear, however, that much of the creative work of Chicana writers exposes the wounds, confronts those who inflict pain, and tries to exorcise the shame that some individuals feel. Thus, this work can be seen as an attempt to grieve, to express the pain, and to heal. As such, it causes discomfort in people who try to deny that the damage exists. The disproportionate hostility that has grown up around Gloria Anzaldúa's work is the response of those who cannot face the emotional wreckage of imperialism as it threatens their spiritual well-being. I have seen this resistance in my classrooms from students who cannot deal with the pain in their own lives and express quite literally their hatred toward Anzaldúa for exposing such emotions to public view. While many legitimate critiques of Anzaldúa's work may be made, the viciousness with which many attack her autobiographical narrative *Borderlands/La Frontera* is much too extreme to be simple theoretical, philosophical, or ideological differences.

Though post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) had been in public discourse for some time, I never really thought about its significance or meaning in a Chicana/o context until I heard Mary Clearing Sky speak at a conference in 1992. A Native American scholar and psychologist, then at Michigan State University, Clearing Sky described and outlined the basic concepts of historic trauma and applied them to Native American peoples in a way that suddenly made sense to me. When a young Chicano in my class exploded over perceived insults from another student in the class, confounding his classmates and frightening them with his intensity, I could not help but think of Clearing Sky's descriptions of possible PTSD behaviors. Normally gregarious and charming, this student almost came to physical blows with the target of his rage, who was equally explosive and dealing with his own demons. I had to step in between them on more than one occasion. The only thing these two agreed on was their loathing of Gloria Anzaldúa's work.

Through private conversations, journaling assignments, and class discussions, I learned that the young Chicano had grown up in relative poverty on San Antonio's West Side. The son of alcoholic parents, both of

whom died before he graduated from high school, he was nineteen and trying to raise his younger brother and two sisters as well as attend college. He received no help from his older siblings, who seemed to be following his parents' path of self-destruction. The other student was an older man, the son of a middle-class alcoholic father who believed in using his fists on his children. While these two men should have been allies, given their sincere commitments to Chicano studies scholarship and activist politics, they could barely stand to be in the same room with each other. As we began to talk and read about historic trauma and unresolved grieving as part of the coursework and the constructive uses of anger, their demeanor in the classroom calmed. While they did not become friends, they were able to declare a truce long enough to engage in more productive discussions. This experience, and others like it, have convinced me that Clearing Sky's ideas are important to consider when thinking about ways to improve coalition politics.

Much of the language she uses comes out of psychology, both popular and professional, and literature dealing with chemical dependency issues. Though I had heard much of this discourse in regard to individual recovery programs, Mary Clearing Sky was the first person I heard speak about it in terms of a communal history. I knew immediately that this was the piece of the puzzle for which I had been searching. Hearing her speak, I recognized the shame-based behaviors I had seen for years in my family, among my friends, in the classroom, and in various political organizations to which I belonged. I also began to see the evidence and support for what she was saying, not only in Native American literature, but splashed across the pages of almost every Chicana text. Her insight made well-read narratives new to me. It added meaningful complexity to my conceptualizations of Chicana writers and of Mexican Americans in a variety of sociohistorical and economic contexts.

San Antonio poet Rosemary Catacalos addresses the communal nature of pain and the experience of being wounded in her poem "(There Has to Be) Something More than Everything." Though it deals with a personal loss, her choice of the collective pronouns "we" and "us" throughout much of the poem nevertheless gives us the feeling that this is something larger than her own discomfort. Yet at the end of the poem, she reverts to the lonely "I" as the person who runs from "mourning."¹

Less abstract than Catacalos, Demetria Martínez, in her poem, "The Conquest," demonstrates through concrete images the connections between Mexican American history, our contemporary positions, and the personal/political dialogues in which we are involved. She identifies the three oppressive states to which we have been subject, implicating Spain, Mexico, and the United States in the process. Next she expresses her distaste toward tourists who see the Southwest only in romantic terms but fail

to understand the painful histories of the old settlements or the crying of those whose stories have been silenced. Martínez also addresses a contemporary phenomenon in which Anglos express jealousy toward those of us still strongly connected to Mexican culture. Again, they ignore any pain that may be associated with that legacy. In responding, Martínez chooses signifiers (like corn and *metates* or stone bowls used for grinding vegetables), which function largely as female symbols in Mexican and Native cultures. Though the poem ends with some measure of anger and defiance, it is clear that some of this rage is repressed.²

Clearing Sky's emphasis on historic trauma and unresolved grieving is an approach that seeks to release that rage—to open and expose what has been hidden for too long. While I have had tremendous misgivings about some of Clearing Sky's ideas, as well as concerns that her analysis lacks any attention to gender specific experiences, I have never stopped thinking about them.³ Once in my consciousness, they resonated with such veracity that I could not avoid them. I had actually begun writing on this topic in the early 1990s, trying to give my students in Chicano studies classes some way to think about internalized oppression and many of the problems in our communities in a historical context. Clearing Sky's ideas contributed greatly to this project, and they eventually became part of my dissertation, where I extended the analysis beyond history to show how this past trauma comingles with contemporary racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. But I did not publicly present a paper on historic trauma and unresolved grieving until the 1994 and 1997 National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) Conferences. It was not too long after 1997 when I began to find other people approaching emotional suffering from a sociohistorical perspective, showing the affect on individuals of trauma inflicted on the group (and vice versa). The number of women of color reaching for clinical information on post-traumatic stress disorder implies the existence of recognizable symptoms, a desire to diagnose the problem, and a search for ways to heal. There are many sources as well among Native American, Chicana/o, and African American authors, indicating not only an immense interest in historic trauma and unresolved grieving, but a kind of drum beat that is speaking to people of color through our mutual experiences. (See note 3.)

Renato Rosaldo reinforced my interest in the topic during an informal discussion I had with him about Clearing Sky's theories and my own thoughts on historic trauma and unresolved grieving. He suggested that we (Native American and Chicana/o scholars and writers) are simply part of a larger public discourse—though not a universal one. Everyone in Native American and Mexican American communities is in some way involved in the "same conversation," he said. "We are all trying to deal with our traumatic history."⁴ While some respond by becoming hyper-Chicano or *Indio*

Supremo, others try to discard any remnants of Mexican or indigenous identity altogether.

It is important to point out some obvious cautions as I begin to describe the manifestations of trauma in our culture. Historic trauma and unresolved grieving, as well as the shame and dysfunction that accompany them, are not exclusive to Mexican Americans. Nor do they only affect one class position. I did not write about this to increase the perception that our socioeconomic and political problems are caused by pathology within the culture, nor to insinuate that Mexican American people as a group are dysfunctional. In fact, the opposite is true. However, one major source of the pain we do experience is clearly in our history and in the reality of ongoing socioeconomic and political inequality. It is not surprising that many people would be adversely affected by growing up in this sociohistorical context. Chicana feminist writer Ana Castillo says in her book *Massacre of the Dreamers*,

The awareness that we have at times in our lives barely survived the most trying and humiliating conditions is what makes our bodies tremble, our minds flounder, and our emotional states flail in fear of the present and future. . . . we must not accept the long held premise that it is due to our inherent weaknesses and that it is our own personal failure.⁵

What is surprising is that despite catastrophic losses and continued discrimination, the vast majority of Mexican Americans have survived with our sense of Self intact and functioning quite effectively. This is a testament to the astonishing strength of our spirit. But we owe it to those who have not survived in the same manner, to those who have borne the burden of imperialism in a different way, to stop denying the effect on us as a people. We must stop seeing the consequences of imperialism as solely an individual problem with a single solution and honor the struggle of others to become fully alive in a nation that so often despises us. This is the task of a true community.

In one of the defining moments of Chicana feminist writing, Gloria Anzaldúa's characterization in *Borderlands/La Frontera* of the U.S./Mexican border as an "open wound" not only refers to its contemporary reality, but also to the historical injury done to Greater Mexico and its people. It is a place, she says, "una herida abierta where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture."⁶ With similar feeling, psychiatric nurse and writer Elena Avila refers to a place where some "souls wander away due to neglect and deprivation; hide due to trauma . . . and loss."⁷ This is a place haunted by both the memory and the daily reality of physical and spiritual violence.

Clinical psychologist Maria Root calls the problem "insidious trauma," because the harmful effects may begin with history, but they continue to accumulate in our collective psyche through racism, sexism, and classism, as well as other forms of oppression to which we may be subject.⁸ Women and men of color suffer this to varying degrees throughout their lives. The trauma, she says, activates survival behaviors, which can be misunderstood by social scientists who cannot understand the impact of racism, heterosexism, classism, and so forth (unless they too are directly affected). Under these conditions, negative stereotypes in such literature may be internalized and have a self-fulfilling influence, which Root says is the insidious nature of stress-related disorders.⁹

Mary Clearing Sky claims that this is not just a problem for the individual, but that indigenous people as a group suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁰ Making a link to PTSD, Elena Avila reminds us that this "dis-ease" was well known to our *antepasados* (ancestors) as "susto pasado," or trauma and unresolved suffering of many years duration.¹¹ The characteristics of PTSD—anxiety, personality disorder, acting out, and addictive behaviors—are clearly evident in the Mexican American community, just as they are among all Americans, even as the causes vary. While the idea of PTSD gained widespread public recognition in thinking about war veterans, few acknowledge the existence of ongoing social, political, and economic conflicts within our own borders. In her classic "Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well-Read Person Could Believe in the War Between-the-Races," Lorna Dee Cervantes makes an excellent comparison between the experience of racism and the trauma caused by daily combat. Using war-related and terroristic signifiers Cervantes shows the damage done as we experience having brown skin in white America. In these selected lines, she says,

sharp-shooting goose-steppers round every corner,
there are snipers in the schools . . .
These bullets bury deeper than logic.
Racism is not intellectual.
I cannot reason these scars away!¹²



In choosing the signifier "goose-steppers," Cervantes ties into an existing sociolect—an emotional, historical memory well known to most readers. But she also makes clear that the physical and psychological devastation of our historic experience is coupled with years of injustice, discrimination, and exclusion. She tells us how it has harmed the community in ways that are not always visible. Cervantes alerts us to the inner fear, generated by outside hostility, that dictates how we see ourselves. Many of the characteristics described by Cervantes in other parts of the poem, the day-to-day fear, the remnants (or scars) of this trauma, the feeling of not belonging

and of not being good enough, as well as the damage that cannot be reasoned away, mirror the symptoms listed by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) for PTSD.

Part of the reason this history has continued to take its toll on our communities (through internalized racism and self-destructive behaviors) has little to do with individual will or strength. Our people have proven over and over again that we have the desire and the tenacity to not only survive, but to become whole (or self-actualized) and to actively resist oppression. Despite our attempted annihilation, or perhaps because of it, we have continued to fight—to struggle against repression. But we cannot ignore our wounds, for they too affect the nature of our survival and the quality of our lives. While it is not an excuse for abdicating personal responsibility to family and community, historic trauma plays a role in the destructive behaviors of individuals. This has important implications for all. Part of the damage has to do with what Clearing Sky says is the inability of affected communities to grieve our losses. Hardened by the experience itself and the necessity of funneling our energy into survival, we are often unable to face the pain. For people like my father, this means displacing the source of the trauma and pain—as well as the anger they engender—onto the self or other inappropriate targets.

Much of mainstream U.S. culture has always failed to acknowledge that the actions of their ancestors have anything to do with their current privileges or the problems now present in our society. They do not want to see or be told that the oppression we experience today is part of a continuum that reaches back into that history. On the contrary, they continue to replay it from their perspective. Yet many mainstream scholars and journalists will readily note the damage in our communities even as the evidence of its source goes unnamed. Like the other implicit information we gather throughout our daily lives, the effect on our collective psyche is accumulative and has enormous consequences. Historic trauma and its relative invisibility in mainstream culture continue to sabotage some of the best efforts of our people to control their own destinies.

"In non-Western thinking," says Ana Castillo, "the body is never separate from the spirit or mind and all curative recommendations" must "consider the ailing person as a whole."¹³ If we want to visualize how the Self is affected by trauma, we can imagine the four primary aspects of a person, which surround the vulnerable, as well as the secure, ego: the mental, the spiritual, the emotional, and the physical. These form a circle around the core of a person and become the first line of defense in the ego's struggle to maintain its health. In a sense, they compose the facade or face with which we operate in the world. A disturbance to, or assault on, any of the four parts of a person will push the center or the core Self off balance.

In contemporary culture we can see the pain and disturbance to these outer features reflected in the work of many women writers. Confessional narratives, like this piece written by Aleticia Tijerina, tell us about the harm that reaches in through the mind and body to ravage the core Self. It is clear Tijerina sees abuse and sexual violence, chemical dependency, and inadequate or discriminatory health care as aspects of our communal history.

I was a junkie. Anglos have been consenting to us darkies shootin' hard drugs since the beginning of their colonization. But the white man didn't actually push the spike into my veins. I did. This act is clearly the embodiment of self-hatred. Hatred which goes back a long time. Goes back to the three-year-old girl terrorized by the knife of her father—to the white welfare woman whispering in my ears, "Your momma is a whore, you will grow up to be a no-good-whore. . . ." Individual incidents in our lives—our collective history—we North Americans—colonized and exploiter alike . . . we take from the oppressor the instruments of hatred and sharpen them on our bodies and our souls.¹⁴

Cognitive faculties and strong spirit are well demonstrated here, yet many authors like Tijerina confess the difficulty of maintaining mental health.¹⁵ Poet Pat Mora, however, suggests that we can never truly know the extent of damage to the core because what we often display is the remarkable nature of our resilience. In her poem "Desert Women," Mora writes, "Our secrets/stay inside, only dried scars show/if you get close/if you dare push/against our thorns/But when we flower, we stun/Like cactuses, we've learned/to gulp and hoard."¹⁶

If we know ourselves well enough to read through our historical and personal memories, as well as our experiences, we may begin to understand what is being revealed and expressed. In a piece titled, "El día de la chicana," included in the Rebolledo and Rivero collection *Infinite Divisions*, Gloria Anzaldúa says that she is ready to see the core Self through the facade, through all of the damage that has been done to us. "[A] seeing through the fictions of white supremacy . . . our true guises and not as the false racial personality that has been given to us and that we have given to ourselves . . . the positive and the negative seen clearly."¹⁷

One of the reasons Mexican Americans—Native Americans and African Americans as well—cannot be compared to other "immigrant" groups has to do with the traumatic histories to which Tijerina and Anzaldúa among others refer. We did not choose to leave our homelands as many European immigrants have, nor elect to be absorbed into the dominant culture through forced assimilation, which is a kind of brutality against the spirit. Our indigenous ancestors made no request to be incorporated into two or

three national states through violence. As Mexican settlers we did not choose to lose our language and culture, to be included (yet excluded) in the original social experiment known as the United States of America. As a result of this material reality, we have been made relatively powerless over and within public and private institutions that directly affect our lives—churches, schools, governments, and the structures of commerce.¹⁸ But the “psychological colonization” associated with that powerlessness is as devastating to the community as are the physical manifestations of systematic exclusion and discrimination.¹⁹

To capture the seriousness of the devastation, some people call the various events in Native American, Mexican, and Chicano history an “American Holocaust.” But a double standard exists between the way the mainstream culture remembers and characterizes certain losses as opposed to others. If we think of the way the European Holocaust has been documented, or the way we have commemorated the various military losses of the U.S. armed forces personnel, and compare them to the way in which the United States remembers the history of conquest in the Americas, we can see profound differences. Chicanas/os, for instance, are unlikely to ever have a museum documenting the atrocities committed by Texas Rangers against Mexican people. We will not have a black marble wall in Washington, D.C., etched with the names of those Mexicans who died in the violent takeover of northern Mexico, or the identities of the Native women who were roped like cattle and then raped by Spanish soldiers.

In fact, the myth and the monument of places like the Alamo may testify to bravery and heroism for Anglo Americans, but to Chicanas/os such myths function as torturous reminders of what has been truly lost. These symbols serve only as white justification for the past and present dominance of brown-skinned peoples. In “Gulf Dreams,” Emma Pérez writes a poignant tale of a childhood full of longing and dreams dashed. She tells of a junior high teacher delivering a lesson on the Alamo, trying to get her young Texas students to “absorb the conqueror’s lies in history books.” Then using her power to humiliate and intimidate the adolescent Chicana, the teacher challenges her to accept the official version of the myth and prove her fidelity to the United States. Though the young woman turns down the opportunity to collaborate with the teacher’s version of the facts, Pérez writes, “In the seventh grade I wasn’t prepared to argue history but I refused to renounce my mestizaje, my parents, my Mexican ancestry to comfort Anglos.”²⁰ Pérez clearly wants to create for readers a different memory of the Alamo.

Of course, who is remembered and mourned by the nation depends on political and socioeconomic clout, as well as the way in which the victims are perceived in the mainstream imagination. The United States certainly

had a history of racism and anti-Semitism firmly in place before, *during*, and after World War II. This in part may explain why it has taken almost fifty years to build the Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C., and more than a century for the Smithsonian to realize that it must return sacred objects and human remains to Native Americans.

The fact that thousands of Mexicanos and Chicanos publicly mourned singer Selena’s death beyond what could reasonably be expected is evidence that we carry much grief within us. The growth of Cinco de Mayo and Dieciseis de Septiembre as important community events in the United States speaks to our longing for a way to commemorate what we have lost and how we have struggled—a public acknowledgment of our history—a reshaping of our collective memory. In addition to being celebrations of community and ethnicity, they are also part of a public discourse around victories against European oppressors—a conversation that seeks to resolve our negative feelings about being subordinate to mainstream culture. We celebrate, renew acquaintances, and take pride in our heritage. Though we do not gather on these days specifically to grieve the losses we have suffered throughout history, many Chicanas/os are now doing so around Día de los Muertos. At these gatherings we create huge public *ofrendas*, on which we place the images and names of national leaders, entertainers, beloved locals, and family members.

Cherríe Moraga pays her respects to our history of devastating losses of life, land, and culture when she connects the past to the present in a piece inspired by the 1992 rebellion in Los Angeles, which she sees as a sign of a larger upheaval that will affect the entire continent. She says, “Our rapist wears the face of death. In a suit of armor, he rides us—cross in one hand, sword in the other. And this is how they’ve always taken us with their gods of war and their men of god.”²¹ While we can read Moraga as generalizing about all oppressed peoples here, the cross and the sword imagery have specific importance to La Raza. In using rape as her metaphor, Moraga feminizes all forms of oppression and thus indicts all oppressors as patriarchs. In this way she unites the oppressed of the world under the rubric of brown women.

As many Chicana feminists have pointed out, the subjugation of the meaning and importance of the feminine principle had already begun to occur in Mexico at the time of indigenous contact with Europe. But it cannot be denied that many patriarchs in the Spanish state and the Catholic Church accelerated that process.²² “Indian women who had once reigned as goddesses now wore the facial brands of slavery and were subjected to the imposition of a single, male, Christian god” and his only son.²³ This kind of process took many *mestizas* in New Spain beyond hope of recovery, which might have been possible in native Mexico, since they still worshiped and had faith in the feminine earth spirits.²⁴

Through five centuries we have endured multiple losses: the loss of life, meaning, lands—our physical lives and a psychological sense of well-being. Pieces of our culture have also been lost, traditional and communal ways of life, family structures, spiritual customs, mythohistorical figures—especially female spirits, ancestor names, and legends. Indigenous languages and Spanish names, as well as traditional pronunciations and usage have come under attack in mainstream U.S. culture. Indian names become rare. Tomás changes to Tom, and Magdalena slips into Maggie. (My grandfather, Rafael, became Rafele on official paperwork when he crossed the border. My father, the Junior in the family, has since become Ray. Both changes represent a movement away from Mexico.) This gloss of acculturation becomes our public face. When or if it solidifies, we lose our traditional relationships with one another, to animals and their spirits (our “tonos” or representatives in the natural world), to the cosmos, and the deities. For Chicanas/os, attacks on bilingualism, English-only laws, and the elitism of European Spanish mean that our code-switching abilities are seen as colloquial and thus insignificant in public discourse, rather than as a legitimate, living language—Caló.

While some aspects of traditional practices and rituals have survived the American Holocaust, much of their original meaning has been lost or distorted through Catholic, elite interpreters and recorders. Such loss inevitably affects our sense of Self. The meaning of our indigenismo/o, of our roots in the Americas, has made us the target of ethnocentrism and racism in both countries. Mexico’s ruling class has used this native past to foster nationalism but has yet to free itself of racist behaviors toward Indians and the assumption of privilege and power by those more European in appearance and lineage.²⁵

The loss of both national lands and traditional spaces has neutralized the material space of communal life. Self-sustaining economies, supported by customs, rituals, and values, have given way to capitalism and subsistence jobs or migratory work. For some, the destruction of communal and self-sufficient lifestyles has robbed people of traditional parenting skills. Role models for child rearing and extended family or fictive kin for child-care disappear as social structures disintegrate and biological parents are killed, are absent for socioeconomic reasons, or suffer ill health (both mental and physical). This means that many children have lost and continue to lose the opportunity to be parented by competent individuals and nurturing community members as additional or substitute parental figures. As children grow in an atmosphere of “multiple marginality” with scarce healthy parenting, spiraling damage is done to each subsequent generation.²⁶ The socioeconomic changes in traditional communities and continuing poverty force people into nontraditional relationships and behaviors, increasing the

chance that nurturing and coherent practices of traditional parenting will be unavailable.²⁷ In an autobiographical piece, Canéla Jaramillo writes of such upheaval:

And the women—my god. We were nothing unless we could stay off drugs and alcohol or away from pregnancy. . . . Most of us didn’t. All of us—men and women alike—are scarred now, our faces marred, our teeth ugly . . . and somehow paranoid. I got out early—left home at fourteen—because the violence was killing my spirit and because my mother’s was already dead. A practicing alcoholic, she’s been telling me since she was thirty, “My life is over.” She’s only forty-six. . . . But I went the wrong way . . . we didn’t have the tools to make a smooth transition from the coarseness of the streets to the unblemished facade of the universities, corporate structures, whatever.²⁸

Though individuals deal with and respond to trauma and massive loss in a variety of ways, as a group Chicanas/os have not been allowed to or had the time to mourn or heal. Our grief is as disenfranchised and disavowed as we have been. For many Mexican Americans, the “memory” itself has been erased in U.S. history classes. While many rally around cries to “never forget” the horrors of Nazi crimes, no mainstream angst has been noted as Chicano and indigenous histories have been rendered invisible. Thus, it is almost impossible for us to understand the link between this memory of trauma and the extent of the devastation that comes from the shaming practices to which we are currently subjected. Forced to maintain a constant position of self-defense, many of us do not fully understand that assaults on the core continue, and we are coerced into a kind of denial. This is especially true when confronted with the charge that we are displaying a “victim mentality.” Such an accusation has to be one of the most brilliant rhetorical strategies in the history of argument. No one in a hierarchical culture, in a country that so prizes dominance, wants to be seen in this way.

In a competitive culture there is stigma and shame attached to losing. This is what mainstream people draw on when they say “we won, you lost, get over it.” However, this is true of both Spanish and Anglo American value systems. Like many other Latinos living in the United States, we have been dominated by two European nations—by two groups of people who thought themselves our intellectual, physical, cultural, and spiritual superiors. (One of them we still carry in our blood and to various extents in our cultural practices.) Hence, we as a people have suffered what Jeanette Rodríguez describes as “layered-on oppression.” For women this burden has been great, because the stigma of losing has been lain at our feet. Contemporary women still feel the impact of this violence and shame in the

form of the Malinche paradigm—a cultural model that sees women as betrayers and whores complicit in the conquest of Mexico.²⁹ (This is part of the reason that Chicana authors challenge the rhetoric of nationalism, ethnic identity, or inherited collectivity—sometimes even as it is reaffirmed.)

While we have a right to embrace our status as victims, we rarely do. Our literature is marked instead by pride in our *mestizaje*, border regions instead of national boundaries, an emphasis on difference, ancient cultural symbols with contemporary definitions, and experimental techniques and styles. The two most common characteristics of Chicana subjective expression are multiplicity and contradiction. This comes from embracing an identity and otherness we have been encouraged to despise, and working through a maze of fragmented memories, national identities, and paradoxical subject positions in an effort to remain connected while simultaneously dispensing with shame.³⁰ Rather than understanding the charge of victim mentality as a form of victim baiting, however, we tend to become stoic—to deny the effects of traumatic experience.

But this failure to face our pain is not just a matter of conscious repudiation. Normal mourning processes have also been interrupted by the ordinary need to survive. We cannot cry out our pain if we are mustering the strength to run from or survive violence, move our families off lost homelands, or migrate to find work. Feeding ourselves and our children on minimum (or less than minimum) wage jobs precludes the time and ability to be self-reflective. If inadequate nutrition takes a toll on the body, it hampers the mind and soul as well. Parents who try to put on a brave face for their children when confronted with adversity disallow their own tears of frustration and sadness. Grief held in is a wound that will not heal. Parents who do this teach their children to stop the soul from releasing pain. Facing the humiliation of dealing with insensitive or patronizing social service workers increases the damage to the spirit rather than allocating energy to recuperation.³¹ Working twice as hard to get an education or maintain a decent job because we cannot be average to get ahead, struggling to preserve the vitality our families require, or fighting the stigma that comes with assumptions and stereotypes about affirmative action policies leaves us with little energy or enthusiasm for introspection.³²

Occupying many social and professional locations where we seem invisible or are silenced by racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia propels us out of mourning and into the struggle for social justice and equality. It becomes more important for us to rebel than to focus on the well-being of the Self. There is so much work to do. Discrimination in education, housing, employment, social services, and the criminal justice system all demand our attention. Rebuilding our communities, reclaiming traditional communal patterns, or simply maintaining the peace in neighborhoods

torn apart by urban pressures leaves no time to grieve our multiple losses. Trying to reconstruct relationships destroyed by poverty, or to define new family models that will contribute to the health and well-being of our children *and* having to defend our right to do so, consume our creative energies. As my friend Susana De León—*danzante*, community activist, and immigration lawyer—has said when we've discussed these issues, "healing is something we must do. But as long as our children are dying, getting lost, being shot, being raped . . . I don't have time to heal, to grieve. I only have time for war. I only have time to fight."

Women forced or choosing to become decisionmakers, operating in the public sphere where we confront patriarchal structures, need to guard our sense of self and depend on our communal strength. Yet for *Lesbianas* or transgendered Mexican Americans, communalism within the larger Mexican American community can be mere illusion. For them racism and ethnocentrism are "compounded by conflicting loyalties and additional tasks in the development of [an] identity" as a woman of color and as a Lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered person. In this case, heterosexism joins racism and horizontal hostility within the community as another source of insidious trauma.³³ Chicanos who have felt emasculated by the mechanisms of conquest, colonization, continual racism, and the ensuing shame these processes entail need to reconstruct communal definitions of manhood rather than reifying European concepts of masculinity. All of us need to repair our ability to survive emotionally. But this cannot happen without facing the damage that has been done.³⁴

Denial and unrealistic perceptions are well-known features of both addiction and the inability to deal with pain. For Chicanas/os denial may be self-imposed, but it can also be forced upon us from the outside by erasing our historical memory. Public schools can be sites of this kind of denial. Even when Eurocentric histories deal with marginalized communities, texts are purposefully constructed to present an "alternative" view of events and social locations on this continent. Such texts rarely interrogate systematic power. Additionally, bias is built into this additive method because it implies that some people merely have a perspective that diverges from an "objective" view of history. Another tactic is the romanticization of cultural histories outside the mainstream. This form of denial ignores the carnage that took place in the Americas, as well as the continuing pathology that exists in the dominant culture as a result of that history.³⁵

In her novel set in the late 1960s, *Delia's Song*, Lucha Corpi deals with another kind of denial—the invisibility of a segment of Mexican American life. Her protagonist is faced with a college professor unaware of any life outside her own social location. The white, middle-class sociologist bemoans the war in Vietnam and the failure of the public to understand why it should

not continue. Since the professor defines the public through her own experience, she says the war goes on because “we don’t know what it is to have our country torn in two, to lose parents, children, brothers or sisters, our homes. To watch a mother put a rifle in her son’s hands and send him to a sure death.”

Corpi confronts this academic’s historical amnesia and insensitivity with the thoughts and words of Delia, a young Chicana activist, who thinks not only of the history of her people, but also of her family’s personal struggle in urban Los Angeles (losing one brother to drugs, one to the war in Vietnam). Delia also knows the reality of ongoing racial oppression.

To lose brothers Lose your children We do know what that is We Chicanos know what that is Oh Mattie We don’t have to go that far [to Vietnam] We’ve been at war here . . . Maybe white people don’t know what war is all about, but we Chicanos know all about it. . . . For us the Civil War never ended. We’re still fighting it.³⁶

Similarly in denial of history, the Catholic Church has never fully acknowledged its affiliation with the Spanish state or the Mexican government. Though it has recently apologized to the indigenous peoples in the Americas, this might be seen as an effort to sustain its religious dominance in Latin America. If there is one thing the Church must learn, it is that one apology cannot erase prodigious amounts of pain. Priests wrote the history of the ancient American civilizations. They recorded indigenous social structures and complex spiritual practices—based on science and a cosmological view of the world—through decidedly Christian conceptualizations. This is one of the mechanisms for splitting the unified duality of Aztec deities into conflicting pairs with dominant male and subordinate female characteristics. Such denial of unity and balance closes this possible source of healing for *Mexicanas* and Chicanas. It hides potential ways of grieving for both genders. In addition to introducing concepts like sin and eternal damnation, Catholicism brought to Mexico other doctrines of denial, urging Indians to transcend the body, to see glory in suffering, to trust in God’s plan that the meek would one day inherit the earth—all denying the brutality and immorality of the Spanish soldiers. Had this history been acknowledged, it may have helped the descendants of those long silenced to focus our anger in more constructive ways. It might have mitigated the shame many people felt.³⁷

In order to survive with any dignity at all, many Chicanas/os have been forced into denial, have learned to look away from our devastating losses, and to repudiate the personal manifestations of communal shame. Violence—against one another and especially toward women and children—is one of the unhealthy ways that we express and inflict shame and rage,

continue the trauma, and prevent grieving. Many of us learned that the world is divided into those who conquer and those who are conquered. We then become determined to take a dominant position in order to protect ourselves—even if this can only be actualized in our interpersonal relationships. This can have devastating consequences primarily for women and children. No matter how unhealthy, the family for most Mexican Americans, at whatever cost to the individual, must remain intact. Denial of the suffering we experience as a result of this impulse to protect the family is Promethean. Often our Spanish/Moorish traditions of maintaining a sense of family honor keep us silent. Religion has been used to teach women to be self-effacing, subservient, and to produce as many children as possible—all of which have served to make women subject to and dependent on men. Such doctrine denies female strength and robs women of the ability to make choices in their own best interest and in self-protection from violence.

Shame and guilt were part of the Church’s arsenal of socialization techniques in teaching people what it meant for women to be sexual beings. The Church, as well as Spanish and later Anglo society, convinced men that women had to be protected from the outside or public world—that her primary concern should be the family. Priests and protestant clergy often stood by the husband and defended the marriage even as women suffered in abusive alliances.³⁸ The legacy of such teaching is replicated in many Mexican American families to this day.³⁹

In a piece written for *Ms* magazine, Sandra Cisneros tells us that the Church’s aversion to female sexuality makes womanhood a concept “full of mysteries” for those Chicanas who grow up immersed in traditional, religious culture. In describing her own body shame, Cisneros says that this combination of Catholicism and *Mexicanidad* (or what she calls a “culture of denial”), “helped to create [a] blur, a vagueness about what went on ‘down there.’” Thus, Cisneros says, it was not until she was an adult, able to separate in some way from Church and family, that she even realized she had a vagina. She thought her period and her urine came from the same opening.

No wonder, then, it was too terrible to think about a doctor—a man!—looking at you down there when you could never bring yourself to look at yourself. ¡Ay, nunca! How could I acknowledge my sexuality, let alone enjoy sex, with so much guilt? In the guise of modesty my culture locked me in a double chastity belt of ignorance and vergüenza, shame. I had never seen my mother nude. I had never taken a good look at myself either. Privacy for self-exploration belonged to the wealthy. In my home a private space was practically impossible.⁴⁰

Cisneros goes on to describe how this confluence of ignorance, shame, and the prescriptives of class have implications for women's physical health.

In Chapter 3 of *Massacre of the Dreamers*, titled "The Ancient Roots of Machismo," Ana Castillo tells us the social function of such patterns as they relate to patriarchal control. "The regulation of female fidelity from a historical economic viewpoint had more to do with man's view of woman as property and his children as heirs to his property than a transgression of morals."⁴¹ The Church, however, acted in concert with and enforced this socioeconomic necessity through strict religious ideals. Castillo says, "the book of Genesis was and remains woman's strongest document to establish once and for all when patriarchy was installed as the *modus operandi* for the whole of humanity."⁴²

In some cases, our denial that anything is amiss takes us into an elaborate romanticization of male/female relationships, the family or the barrio. We do not like to speak of the harm done to us by Mexicanos/Chicanos, because we know their actions are sometimes the manifestation of offended spirits, humiliation, and unresolved feelings. Aleticia Tijerina, in a coming-out piece called, "I Am the Lost Daughter of My Mama's House," poignantly shows us what it is like for a child torn out of her own culture by the effect of various kinds of oppression.

In my memory lies the knowledge that my own father tried to kill me. He took the tool of the oppressor's hatred and used it against his family. I do not forgive him. . . . I have lost much to the oppressor. My family. My language. My culture. Still I search. Long trails of ancestral serapes flap in the winds of life carried from one generation to the next.⁴³

For many of us it is also true that whatever assault we experience in our families or communities may be somehow perceived as less daunting than what we face in mainstream America. In dealing with racism or classism, family and community may be our source of strength and safety, no matter how damaged they are. That is where we feel most connected—most tied to some ancient root (as Tijerina insinuates in the previous paragraph). In terms of homophobia, however, the family can be more rejecting than the society at large. For many women, the feeling that we must choose between two spaces so unsafe leads us to a sense of hopelessness. But, Chicana writers, like Tijerina, are neither silent nor forgiving.⁴⁴

Gloria Anzaldúa tells us in much of her work about the degree of heterosexism in Spanish/Catholic culture.⁴⁵ In Chapter 2 of *Borderlands*, she explains that a Chicana Lesbian faces all the layers of oppression, as well as censure within her own culture because she breaks not one, but "two moral prohibitions." She is sexual and she is lesbian. To come out is to risk being

separated from one's home environment, to be thrown out into the Anglo world. Total rejection, however, may come only after an attempted confinement or conversion. (Though the seriousness of it might vary, few Chicanas are without a story of how at some point, her parents tried to "lock her up"—or suggested it—as a solution to what they perceived as immoral behavior.)

When I encounter these stories, I think of how overwhelmed I was in 1987 when I first read Gloria Anzaldúa's statement in *Borderlands*, "Not me sold out my people but they me."⁴⁶ It was a direct confrontation of the Malinche paradigm, but also a thought that had never occurred to me, that I could be "betrayed" because of my own culture's prejudices. Since then, in reading Chicana stories, I have found reason to recall it over and over. Anzaldúa also tells us how unsettling this realization can be. "Woman does not feel safe when her own culture, and white culture, are critical of her; when all males of all races hunt her as prey. Alienated from her mother culture, 'alien' in the dominant culture . . . her face caught between . . . the different worlds she inhabits."⁴⁷ As women of color we must face two worlds in denial: one trying to hide its history of genocide and inequality, the other trying to deny us our sexuality and equality.

It is human nature to protect the Self against such overwhelming pain. Many of us do that by becoming numb to it in one way or another. Dissociation is an act that separates us from the traumatic experience or the intense emotions associated with shame. Therapist Beverly Engel describes it as "emotional anesthesia." Similarly, addiction in any form is suppressed pain, grief unspoken, trauma unacknowledged. Sometimes this means a dependence on alcohol or other drugs. But it can also mean an addiction to work, sex, pornography, the Internet, gambling, or a variety of dangerous activities—anything that interferes with daily, *intimate* life. Working hard for many Mexican Americans means mind-numbing menial labor in order to survive. This is not an addiction in the conventional sense, but it can act as an anesthetic nevertheless—one that readily serves the needs of a free market economy.⁴⁸ As such, the pusher of this addictive substance is capitalism. When I remember or think about the people I have known working in factories or the fields, there were always those who worked harder than anyone else, went beyond what it took to survive, beyond what was expected, or even ideally desired by the bosses. They were physical and emotional zombies by the end of the day, incapable of responding to their own or anyone else's needs. Too tired to feel.

Writing of a painful life of deprivation at the margins of society, Marina Rivera, in her poem "Mestiza," shows how even the brightest of the working poor can be silenced and left numb to life's possibilities. Clearly this kind of dissociation is imposed upon us. "Even if the mind were a waterfall

of life itself," she says, "they would tie you by your tongue . . . because of your poverty/you ate your dreams, learned to walk on your longings until they wore out."⁴⁹

Other Chicanas/os—less economically precarious—get the same effect by becoming workaholics in professional or white-collar jobs, in social service agencies, and in mainstream or radical politics.⁵⁰ Both kinds of overwork can kill the spirit. But this too can be seen as an imposition. Organizations and institutions where the demand on us is great because we exist in small numbers become perfect arenas for this type of avoidance. The inability to say "no" to the ridiculously numerous requests for our time may lead to emotional burnout, physical illness, and mental exhaustion.

When we are in denial and operating in dysfunctional states, we may not teach or learn Mexican traditions or the Spanish language. Strongly political and resistant children feel and return shame when parents act out their own internalized feelings of inferiority and demand total assimilation—thinking that it will spare their children the violence of racism. Such mothers and fathers try to erase any traces of Mexican or indigenous culture from their children. Conversely, parents and grandparents who want to return to their homeland, or relatives still in Mexico, will see their acculturated offspring and call them sell-outs or *pochos*, increasing the sense of dislocation and the disfavor we already feel. Out of a desperate need to fit in with mainstream peers, some children may choose to reject their parent's ethnicity and culture, embracing U.S. mainstream culture with the full intention to discard Mexicanness. But thankfully, totally discarding or erasing our ethnicity is usually impossible. If your grandmother or your mother is Mexican, she cannot help teaching you much about being Mexican even if she does not mean to do so. This has to do with implicit cultural knowledge that is not consciously taught, or avoided, but is nevertheless learned and accumulated over a lifetime. No matter how much we disaffirm, some remnant remains.

As we continue to confront discriminatory America, layers of shame keep building across the generations, the original lacerations fester, and without mourning our losses, without tending these wounds, our bruised hearts begin to search for protection. This may mean shutting down, but it may also mean behaving inappropriately.⁵¹ *Shame is an insidious method of social control*. It is similar to guilt and the two emotions have some parallel consequences and manifestations. (In many cases, one leads to the other.) But there is also a subtle distinction to be made.⁵² People who feel guilty generally *do* things they are not supposed to do when they act out. Guilt, Vicki Underland-Rosow tells us, is associated with making a mistake. Others perceive these people as individuals whose needs and responsibilities, successes and failures, *only* reflect singular desires and actions. They do not re-

fect on anyone else, and it is assumed that amends can be made. For these people, there is no need to consider the larger society.⁵³ People who feel shame, on the other hand, generally *do not* do the things they are supposed to do. Underland-Rosow says that shame is the feeling or perception that as a person you are flawed at the core. No wrongs can be made right because the very being is wrong. "Internalized shame is experienced as a deep and abiding sense of being defective, never quite good enough as a person."⁵⁴ The Cervantes poem quoted earlier clearly illustrates this "nagging preoccupation of not being good enough."⁵⁵

In "La Prieta," Gloria Anzaldúa speaks of being brown, queer, and poor. She illustrates the process of shaming, the way in which doing something outside the norm becomes an excuse for others to name-call. She also shows how this causes horizontal hostility among members of the same oppressed ethnic group. Following this process is an attempt at acculturation and finally an inability to act at all.

eating at school out of sacks, hiding our "lonches" papas con chorizo behind cupped hands and bowed heads, gobbling them up before the other kids could see. Guilt lay folded in the tortilla. The Anglo kids laughing—calling us "tortilleros," the Mexican kids taking up the word and using it as a club with which to hit each other. My brothers, sister and I started bringing white bread sandwiches to school. After a while we stopped taking our lunch altogether.⁵⁶

Carmen Morones illustrates a similar effect of inner shame in her short story, "Grace." Her protagonist is a young Chicana named Frances, who is hoping for a scholarship to UCLA. Her guidance counselor discourages her from applying, telling her that he doesn't think she can compete with other applicants. In response, she lingers in the hallway, ashamed to go back to her class. "She felt so small," Morones writes. "A nobody. A nothing. She felt angry with Mr. Lobauer for treating her like she was stupid. But more than that she was angry at herself for having let herself want something so badly that she knew deep within that she would never have."⁵⁷ In the last sentence, Morones acknowledges how shame can coexist with internalized oppression. Though Grace knows she is not stupid and is angry about being treated as such, she turns that rage inward, and instead of blaming the system, she blames herself.

Unfortunately, the United States is not the only social environment in which Chicanas/os feel flawed. As Pat Mora expresses in her poem "Legal Alien," we Chicanas/os can experience uneasiness in a Mexican context as well. Though we may have mastered smooth transitions from one to the next, we still understand that we will be perceived as "alien" in both spaces because we are, as Mora says, "American but hyphenated . . . between the

fringes of both worlds." Yet, we cover our sense of dislocation "by smiling/by masking the discomfort/of being pre-judged/Bi-laterally."

When people who feel deep shame act out, their inability to live up to prescriptive expectations of the dominant culture is perceived as representative of the entire group—as bringing dishonor to the community, ethnic group, or nation.⁵⁸ Socioeconomic status often determines who has the luxury to consider her- or himself an individual in the United States. Combine this understanding with thinking about who should feel guilty for the American Holocaust, as well as whom the process has shamed, and we begin to see the mainstream as a guilt culture, while Mexican Americans can be seen as a shame culture. This is one of the reasons the larger society sees a white lawyer selling cocaine as an individual, but a Mexican American bringing marijuana across the border as symbolic of an outlaw culture, and, why we (Mexicans) automatically wince whenever people in our community commit crimes that are publicly broadcast. We see it as bringing shame to La Raza, because we know that is the way it will be perceived by the larger society. We Chicanas/os are often communal actors, whose individual desire is subsumed by the needs of the whole.⁵⁹

Thus, shame can be used to promote discriminatory actions thought to increase the public good and make criminal those behaviors that interfere with its interests. Basing his theory on the work of Michel Foucault, Thomas L. Dumm argues that the penitentiary system is constitutive of liberal democracy. That it "formed the epistemological project of liberal democracy, creating conditions of knowledge of Self and Other that were to shape the political subject required for liberal and democratic values to be realized in practice."

America—ideologically conceived as a system of "self-rule"—nevertheless needed an institution that would encourage people to adopt its values. The threat and shame of punishment was expected to create individuals who could rule themselves. We can still see this foundational thought in public discourse around the need for longer jail sentences, more severe punishment, and the death penalty as "deterrents," though this is not borne out as a preventative in social science research.⁶⁰ Shame may work to devalue the people who do not contribute to society in the normalized way, but it does not prevent people from committing crimes. (Nor does it stop the justice system, including police forces, from criminalizing and incarcerating either innocent people, or people of color in unfair numbers.) Shame does, however, encourage innocent people to plead guilty to crimes they have not committed.⁶¹

Clinical psychologist Gershen Kaufman tells us that shame is central to human life, because it has such a profound impact on all areas of the Self

and thus on our interpersonal relationships. As such, it "extends well beyond our contemporary concerns with the problems of addiction and abuse, the emergent reality of dysfunctional family systems, or even the current ascendancy of the recovery movement." He feels that it also plays a major role in "minority group relations, minority identity development, national identity development, and international relations."⁶² To get at this idea, Kaufman draws a distinction between shame as innate affect (something all humans feel at some point), and shame that is internalized as the psyche is developing. The latter is not universal. It occurs and becomes part of the Self when an ethnic identity is in formation. This makes it an automatic or subconscious response that is constantly functioning. It does not require a specific triggering event. This means that *shame can act as a form of social control even in the absence of direct oppression.*

It is precisely following the internalization of shame as a major source of one's identity that the self becomes able to both activate and experience shame without an inducing interpersonal event. The self is then vulnerable to shame irrespective of any external messages communicated from others. In effect, shame becomes autonomous when internalized and hence impervious to change. In the process of internalization lies the [social] significance of shame.⁶³

This is why ingesting shame as a child is so significant, and why many of us seem to have a very low tolerance for any kind of slight we encounter as adults—whether it is intended or not. It is also why some of us react even in the absence of any real insult. The effects of discrimination and dominance are cumulative. And, this is internalized from the very moment we begin to recognize our difference and to see ourselves as inferior in the oppressor's eyes.

The sources of our shame are extensive. We learn it in our homes from parents like my father who has been made to feel inferior by the dominant culture. It comes to us through our social contacts, through the racism we encounter, whether it is blatant and conscious, or well intentioned, unaware, and subconscious. We learn it in schools from biased and ignorant classmates and teachers who are ethnocentric, if not directly racist, as well as from the somatic paranoids and biased individuals pervasive in the Church. They invade our homes and schools, dispensing shame along with verses from the Bible and rules from Rome. Textbooks, academic research, and statistical studies erase our histories, ignore our culture, and blame us for our overrepresentation at the bottom of the economic social structure.⁶⁴ This shame is often internalized and causes family members to debase one another in response to

racism and ethnocentrism. This can happen through colorism or shade—difference, lookism, sexism, and homophobia. Children exposed to massive amounts of humiliation and contempt from every direction become ashamed of parents who seem to conform to stereotypes or display certain ethnic behaviors that have been vilified or trivialized by outsiders. People in the mainstream, and sometimes within the family or community, will stigmatize anyone exhibiting any aspect of these “negative” images.⁶⁵

Contempt for who we are as Mexicans is perpetuated in various media representations of Hispanics or Latinos, through unrepresentative images or distorted stereotypes, and in primarily injurious portrayals unbalanced by positive ones. In our almost complete absence from film and television, except as caricatures, we get the message that we are not part of the United States (unless we are so whitewashed that we are no longer recognizable as Mexican or Chicana/o). Covert and overt messages from bosses and on job sites, at unemployment offices, welfare agencies, and anti-immigrant political speeches, or in newspaper editorials relay negative reactions to our presence and remind us of our “place” in the larger society. Through condemnation of our language usage (by both English and Spanish speakers) our very method of communication becomes a way to belittle us.⁶⁶

This stigma is evident as friends and family members respond to prodigious humiliation with conflicting messages of hypermasculine stoicism and over-the-top emotional expressiveness. Our personal relationships suffer and become distorted in an atmosphere of unresolved grief and profound sadness, derogation, and disgrace, as well as anxiety about our social location and safety. When we are not clinging to one another in our mutual fear and frustration, we distrust those most like us. Anzaldúa says, “Chicana feminists often skirt around each other with suspicion and hesitation. For the longest time I couldn’t figure it out. Then it dawned on me. To be close to another Chicana is like looking into the mirror. We are afraid of what we’ll see there. Pena. Shame. Low estimation of self.”⁶⁷

This internalized shame leads to conflicts within the Mexican American and larger Latino communities. Hostility between those who want to assimilate or embrace mainstream culture and those who disparage it, for instance, is really a contrast between two responses to racism and shaming. One is defiant of the master; the other acquiescent or complicit. (Neither is to blame.) In some cases, the one who wishes to join the mainstream will not accept it, or does not perceive it, as a dominant force. For others, joining to whatever degree it is possible is a way of appropriating some of the power and privilege we recognize.

Whatever its source or manifestation, elitism has a deleterious effect on the psyche in terms of social relationships. Trouble often erupts between Chicanas/os and Latin Americans who have grown up as part of the elite or

mainstream in their own countries. This happens because these Latinas/os do not understand how shame—as the legacy of conquest and colonization and as an ongoing process—has affected working-class Mexican American people. Nor do such elites know what it means to internalize shame at an early age. “Many Latin American countries do not have a middle class as we know it in the United States. Thus, elitist attitudes, based on dichotomous social class divisions, are transplanted to the United States” by upper-class Latinos.⁶⁸ They sometimes fail to perceive the depth of injustice and social inequality in this country or to understand our need to respond with intense anger. Even if they encounter racism or ethnocentrism in the United States, they do so as adults. Their psyche or sense of Self did not develop in a climate of hatred, as it has for Chicanas/os. Hard feelings will develop if these Latinos are recruited—or decide on their own—to take advantage of affirmative action programs even if they come from wealthy families and have not lived a lifetime of disadvantage.⁶⁹

Though this conflict grows out of European, hierarchical structure, racism, and culpability, it does not lessen the sad fact that assimilated Mexicans and elite Hispanics can reinforce feelings of shame in those that cannot or will not assimilate. Such people may join the mainstream in its demand that we forget about the past, which is a denial of history’s connection to continuing discrimination. Since it tends to place blame for the failure to rise on the individual, it is also a disheartening example of victim blaming.

When we do not mourn what we have lost, or deal with the shame, when we deny our emotions, avoid any thought of the events in our lives or memories of our past that cause us pain, we only increase or prolong the symptoms of PTSD. If we avoid grieving, which necessarily includes thinking about the trauma, then we never face the injured Self. Failure to do so can result in inappropriate emotional responses to stimuli in our everyday lives. We may feel overwhelmed by little things that go wrong, yet unaffected by a major crisis. We can be filled with enormous grief over insignificant events like the loss of a soccer game, but express or experience little emotion when someone close to us disappears from our life. Rage may be directed at a child who spills milk, while we exhibit numb indifference in response to spousal violation.⁷⁰

Such dysfunction plays out in our families, where only the needs of the people most severely afflicted by stress disorders get met. This can result in the abuse, neglect, and abandonment of children. Without healthy parental skills or role models, there is no one to foster, maintain, or repair our self-esteem. The lack of extended families due to migration can mean there is no one to teach us our personal and collective history from a Mexican perspective, no one to combat the shaming processes nor empathize with

our pain. When we do not see our inherent and individual value reflected in the eyes of our parents, it is very difficult to learn to protect ourselves. In dysfunctional households we only learn to internalize more shame. There is no example of dealing with trauma or doing grief work for us to follow, no one to talk with about our unresolved feelings. In fact, when the need to express or explore our emotions is constantly stifled, we learn not to speak—cutting off a potential path to regaining our balance. Feeling and subjective need become taboo. No emotional life is possible in an atmosphere where intensity is either forbidden or misdirected.⁷¹

The whole Self, capable of so much more, is denied, lost, or forbidden. "*Sin alma no puedes animarte pa' nada.*"⁷² In this state, personal needs or desires become unnecessary. Lacking an entire range of emotions, we have no reason to set or learn boundaries or limits. If we do not learn how to defend ourselves or see the need to do so, we may give others access to us in unhealthy ways—simultaneously closing down our vulnerability to genuine, human connection. At the same time we may trespass on the rights and safety of others or take advantage of their weaknesses and insecurities.⁷³ For some this leads to promiscuity, a way of experiencing intensity without having to feel it. Canéla Jaramillo writes:

I used my body against the way my mother used hers: fucking but never cooking, cleaning or loving. Until I realized it was the same kind of poison . . . I fell in love with a woman—first in a long string of "broken children" I began to collect, trying to nurse my own pain, to rock it to sleep . . . we unleashed a lot of fury and terror on each other, just trying to be vulnerable enough to love.⁷⁴

Professional scholars may become stuck in thought and analysis. Practicing a kind of intellectual promiscuity they separate themselves from old community ties and responsibilities in the process. This may not appear on the surface as dysfunction, but it can be a way to avoid intimacy. If we wish to push down the emotional residue of oppressive or painful experience, we may avoid talking to people with whom we grew up or deny our working-class roots except as it is politically expedient to remember them. It can also mean sharing the bulk of our lives with people with whom we are in no danger of forming truly intimate relationships. For Mexican American women who respond in this fashion, *Chicanisma* is no longer a piece of the soul, but merely a rhetorical tool.

Internalized shame "forms the foundation around which other feelings about the Self will be experienced . . . until finally the Self is engulfed. In this way shame becomes paralyzing." While we may avoid some pain in the short term by shutting down, no positive emotions can be experienced either.⁷⁵ Emotions—good or bad—are an essential part of a life fully lived.

Without them we cannot move or grow. We can exist, but it is not the abundant life to which we are entitled. Elena Avila tells us that "Without soul, we feel empty . . . and homeless. We look into space and long for 'something' that will give us that childlike innocence, joy, and creativity. Some of us become cynical, withdrawing and isolating ourselves from each other. Or we [find a way] to escape."⁷⁶ Finding alternative "fuels" that can substitute for life energy—anything to which we may become addicted—further assails the Self. When the feelings get erased you cannot experience attachment.⁷⁷

Unfortunately, this way of dealing with anguish does not stop with any individual. We pass it all on to the next generation, the effect of the original trauma, the unresolved grief, the shame, the dysfunction, and the addictive behaviors. You do not have to be actively engaged in the addiction to pass on the spiritually crippling turmoil. "Dry drunks" can transmit dysfunction through emotionally debilitating behaviors that show up in the next generations as physical or sexual abuse. Such things add to the original wound even if we have no conscious connection to the memory, because they continue (or begin for our children) the assault on our bodies, minds, spirits, and emotions. The inability to experience intimacy, to feel or give love unconditionally can spread across the community as it is expressed in violence toward others—(re)creating trauma for all those involved. In this way children in families who have managed to become relatively healthy, can reinherit dysfunction through public behaviors and social contacts. Members of the family still vulnerable to stress can then fall back into familiar dysfunctional patterns. If the problem is in the community it can be passed on.⁷⁸

Like African American and Asian women, Chicana authors have been assailed for revealing the pain and inequality that exists in our lives. As men, Chicanos may feel personally blamed by revelations of abusive relationships, chauvinistic paternal figures in the community or tyrannical fathers, preferential treatment of our brothers, and other manifestations of cultural sexism. This perception (not the criticism itself) only adds to their own guilt and shame, as well as reinforces the notion of women as traitors—in this case, the betrayers of "family" secrets.⁷⁹ But the major problem with stories that reveal the suffering of Chicanas is that some readers tend to fixate on it, not understanding or looking for the origins of this heartache in anything but individual choice, response, and conduct. Other readers who are themselves "victims of catastrophic events" or dysfunctional behaviors "may suffer from sudden flashbacks that disrupt their lives and catapult them back to the abusive situation. Remembering as they do, having their lives disrupted so, they feel isolated and different. . . . They may also despair that there is no hope, that there is nowhere to turn."⁸⁰

Such people do not want our vulnerability and shame exposed because it is too painful to confront. Neither do they want to be judged by outsiders because of it.

Despite the dangers involved, Chicanas cannot and will not abandon this work. Rarely do they leave readers without hope—even as they express their own pain. Over and over in Chicana narratives we see the memories, the personal and communal effects of our historic wounding, unresolved emotions, and daily struggles.⁸¹ We see characters, which resemble the people in our communities, suffering what we do, acting out of internalized shame and displaying incongruous behaviors. But we also see personal journeys through the pain—women confronting the “shadow beast” of a painful past.⁸² Chicana writers seem to know that pain, anger, and fear—as well as their corollary inappropriate reactions—will not dissipate without exposure. It will only grow more intense and explosive as contemporary stresses exacerbate the problems that began with social and political injustice.

In the United States, the social unrest that explodes out of our pain quickly becomes a battle between mismatched opponents. The government has the most effective weapons of annihilation and control. People responding to an oppressive regime rarely have more than our bodies. Thus, psychological distress will never sustain an effective, ideological revolution. Unfortunately, rage and grief are more likely to implode rather than explode. In the land of the free, radical action is easily contained. Chicana writers are more apt to commit to a war of words, to cross figurative lines in the sand, to deliberately engage in arenas where change is slow, but physical death or incarceration is unlikely. As agents in a discursive struggle, Chicana writers must reveal how we are affected by inequality wherever it exists, despite objections and trivialization by male (or male-identified) critics. While intrafamilial tensions as subject matter can be universal themes, we must make them ethnically, nationally, culturally, and historically specific. *The connection between historical memory, dysfunctional behaviors, and oppression must be clear.*

Elena Avila says that the place of our healing is embedded in our cultural heritage.

We are not strangers to trauma, oppression, and loss. We . . . have had to fight long and hard to preserve our culture. I thank our ancestors for knowing that we are more than a body . . . we are also a soul. Our soul is our unique essence, our life force . . . when our soul is present, we accept dualized and fragmented parts of us as a paradox . . . we understand the paradox. We are a proud, Chicano people who no longer tolerate the injustice and oppression of a

society that does not recognize the earth wisdom of her indigenous people.⁸³

It is this aspect of the literature—this resilient *indigenismo*—that is most often missed by mainstream audiences and cultural critics seduced by the promise (and sometimes economic rewards) of multiculturalism and diversity. But Avila goes on to point out that identifying with this *indigenismo* has a communal function beyond a romantic longing for post-modern complexity.

our culture is rich with healing and our words can become Yerba Buena words when we tap into the old wisdom of our antepasados. Our souls are deeply embedded into that simple earthy knowledge, and we can find ourselves “back home” when we open up to all that we are.⁸⁴

History and tradition are part of our present *and* our future. Neither problems nor solutions solely originate with the individual. In order to be effective in public life, however, we must be healthy enough to think critically about our past and to form sound alliances with other people. Genuine social change depends on both. Masculine movement politics, focused solely on economic inequality, do not encourage us to reveal our human needs, our psychological distress, or emotional pain. Our own defensiveness sometimes inhibits our ability to create connections with others. It teaches us to hide our vulnerability and causes us to distrust. (Of course, this may be a learned survival strategy.) But Chicana authors seem to understand that acknowledging the loss, the disgrace, and the pain in our lives—and learning to trust—is a major step toward eradicating the kind of vulnerability that grows out of dysfunction. In “Corazón de una anciana,” Edna Escamill writes of her need to deal with the psyche, not just ideological struggle.

¡LA RAZA! Sometimes all it means to me is suffering. Tragedy. Poverty. Las caras de los tortured santos y las mujeres en luto, toda la vida en luto. La miseria is not anything I want to remember and everything I cannot forget. Sometimes the bravery in facing and struggling in such life is too little. The courage with which a people siguen luchando against prejudice and injustice is not glory enough. I am not content with that picture—I am only crazy.⁸⁵

In order for us to be able to help succeeding generations make healthy connections to our spiritual mothers and blended cultural traditions (Indian, Spanish, Mestizo, and the United States), we have to deal with our

own wounds. As Gloria Anzaldúa begins to move toward the new mestiza consciousness in *Borderlands*, she says:

I acknowledge that the self and the race have been wounded. . . . On that day I gather the splintered and disowned parts of la gente mexicana and hold them in my arms. Todas las partes de nosotros valen . . . I will not be shamed again / Nor will I shame myself. I am possessed by a vision: that we Chicanas and Chicanos have taken back or uncovered our true faces.⁸⁶

If we understand that oppression is not simply about political or institutional discrimination, but that it is also a form of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional abuse, we can cleanse ourselves and stop internalizing the hatred and humiliation we experience. We can celebrate, without apology or qualification, the strength it has taken to survive this history. Realizing that we have this power makes obvious our duty to feel and express our rage over what we have lost. To explode rather than implode.

Mexican Americans who learn the “truth” of our history must either deny it or face the intense anger it engenders. This is not easy for damaged people who have learned to suppress feelings. But, we must do so in ways that do not add to our adversity and pain, but will renew us.⁸⁷ Avoidance mechanisms drain us. The effort it takes to keep our feelings down saps our strength. “Anger,” Beverly Engel maintains:

[I]s energy, a motivating force than can empower those who feel helpless. Anger is your way out. By releasing anger in a constructive way, you will increase your ability to truthfully communicate what you feel. Speaking . . . will prevent the build-up of tension [that has exhausted your supply of energy]—energy that could otherwise be used to feel and express love and compassion.⁸⁸

Our displaced spirit “is so resilient and forgiving. It will come back to us when we take the time and courage to look for it. It will come back when we commit to care for it and allow it expression.”⁸⁹

Perhaps the first step is to realize that this anger is justified. As Chicanas, we have every right to be angry with our oppressors, to feel rage at family members or friends who act in similar ways or in collusion with those who dominate us, to be repulsed by anyone who excuses or protects the institutional and personal tyrants in our lives. We are right to resent those who express sympathy with our plight but refuse to act concretely when they have the power to do so. It is legitimate to feel hostile toward anyone who does not believe that we have suffered or who trivializes our experience. Irritation is the only sane response to someone who tells us to transcend our pain or forget it. People who blame us for our own oppression deserve our

exasperation and wrath when they fail to acknowledge or see the extent to which we have been damaged—or conversely, they expect us to constantly act out of that damage, ignoring our strength and ability to self-direct our lives. We have the right to be angry no matter how long ago the original trauma occurred or how different things were then, no matter how much progress has taken place, no matter how ignorant or well-intentioned our oppressors have been, no matter what change is promised in the future. Our fury is justified anytime we are ignored, silenced, negatively stereotyped, incorrectly labeled, or otherwise not respected. Any occasion in which our history is omitted or lied about deserves our indignant dismissal.⁹⁰ Until equality and justice become reality, we have a right to be angry.

But, in order to respond in healthy ways, we must learn to understand anger as separate from other emotions and to recognize with whom or with what we are angry. This is not always easy because the shame and anger often get mixed up. Or the anger over the traumatic events in our personal lives often becomes intertwined with political outrage. People who have suffered trauma in their interpersonal relationships may misdirect their rage over social injustice onto family members. Or, people angry with intimates who have hurt them may project their rage onto potential allies in a political struggle. Sometimes the level of paranoia and distrust among activists is stunning.

In some cases, shame can take the place of anger in our understanding of what we feel. This is especially true for women, who, are told as children and as adults that we are not really angry, that what we think is anger is really fear, jealousy, or insecurity. Thus, we learn to replace our anger with other emotions thought more suitable to proper female behavior. As adults our anger is trivialized as PMS or vilified as bitchiness. For women of color this bind may be reinforced by messages about appropriate or safe behavior based on race and ethnicity.⁹¹ (Because those with whom we get angry could be dangerous to us.) Chicanas also face the dilemma that when we get angry, mainstream people often do not hear what we are saying because they are listening to us through stereotypes that paint us as hot-blooded and explosive, or we are equally dismissed—as loud, animated, intense, and easily agitated.

Destructive releases of anger help no one and may hurt us, or people close to us, especially if it is displaced and we strike out at someone who has not harmed us or is not the cause of our anger. Furtive or covert retaliation falls into this category, as do vengeance and manipulation. Any indirect method fails to truly express justified anger. Directing anger inward by suppressing it or trying to ignore the feeling is equally counterproductive.⁹²

Expressing anger takes courage. We have to overcome the fear of rejection (in a society that does not value constructive disagreement) and fear

of retaliation (in a nation that is hostile and violent). Nevertheless, we must try to do so, because the release of anger has many benefits. It can alleviate much of the shame and self-hatred we have accumulated because the more we stand up and face the source of our anger the more likely we are to stop blaming ourselves. The resulting improvement in the way we see ourselves lifts our hopes and allows us to dream. It also releases the energy we spend suppressing anger to be spent on more productively resistant activities. Once this physical tension eases, our bodies may be less prone to the corporeal manifestations of stress. When we discharge anger and shame it frees us to recognize and express other, more positive and pleasurable emotions. Each time we express anger constructively, our inner resolve strengthens and we get better at clarifying our positions, directly expressing our needs and making our boundaries clear. We can move from casualty to survivor, from someone controlled by the trauma and unresolved feelings to someone self-directed and able to work effectively for reform in genuine alliance with others.⁹³

Constructive release of anger requires understanding that anger is a normal human response—that it is part of the affective system with which we are born. It is neither good nor bad. This does not mean we blame others for what we feel, though their actions may have triggered the response. But simply blaming (rather than identifying and expressing our feeling) fuels the anger, turns it inward, and keeps it from dissipating. If we hold people and institutions accountable for their actions, rather than simply blaming, we are opening the door to possibilities, to negotiation and problem solving.⁹⁴

While the history of trauma and survival (that necessarily displaces normal grieving) is something most Mexican Americans share, responses to such stimuli vary. That is the reason some people seem unscathed and continue to function without apparent difficulty, able to sail smoothly the ups and downs of everyday life. Others respond moderately, neither fully functional nor dysfunctional, but somewhere in between, depending on the circumstances, hitting rough water with some failures, but surviving relatively well overall. Still others seem to bear the full brunt of the traumatic experience, those of us whose whole lives seem dark and destructive, damaged people who capsize even in calm seas.⁹⁵ While the offspring will similarly respond individually to their own experiences with traumatic events or the legacy of dysfunction in family and community, some will have a better chance at survival than others. But a chance is not a guarantee. Thus, the children of emotionally healthy parents may still end up in gangs, just as some children in dysfunctional families succeed at building their own seaworthy ships and sail out of the destruction.

As I said elsewhere, if the problem is in our community it can be passed on. But so can the ability to heal the Self. For Chicana authors that pattern is provided through the strong sense of self present in autobiographical

prose, or it is passed on from the (literal or figurative) grandmother to a feisty protagonist. We can see, both in literature and in our lives, models for defying authority and subverting the dysfunction of the parents. Chicana writers are taking major steps toward recovering the lost self, or as Anzaldúa and Castillo have both suggested, healing the split. Though few of us will grieve or seek healing in as poetic or ritualistic a way as the writers, we must acknowledge the links between our collective and personal pain. We can only do this by studying history to discover the true nature of the American Holocaust. This may include exploring similar histories and the common elements of oppression among other peoples.⁹⁶ In doing so, we begin to see patterns shared by possible allies. We also need to learn about the socioeconomic and political devices of oppression and the way that problems in our communities are exploited or used as justification for continued neglect. As historian James Diego Vigil writes, "Making people feel inferior because of how they look, speak, and/or act is clearly a mechanism to keep them socially immobile."⁹⁷

As many women of color have pointed out in texts on the value of testifying, our stories of abuse and addiction should be told outloud, because both individual and community histories can provide us with survival strategies. Though often in textual form, this information does not have to lose its collective meaning, because it can always be returned to oral forms. This kind of witnessing or testifying has always been part of the healing process—and it is crucial for marginal communities and previously silenced voices. When we speak, we explode our sense of isolation and create new patterns of behavior for our children. We take the first steps toward healing because we let the pain escape. We are not numbing it or pushing it down. Eventually we will allow ourselves and others to remember and (re)experience the pain, to grieve the losses, and to know that we can survive traumatic events with a full range of emotions.

"When we experience grief, the grief is palpable, the sounds of the grieving are not blocked and the individual sobs and cries with every cell of the body."⁹⁸ Such a cry can be cleansing, provide release, and help heal the hurt. It helps the soul know what to do with so much pain. An old Mexican saying warns us to "Cry, child, for those without tears have a grief which never ends."⁹⁹ Like babies, if we cry hard and long, we sweat. We no longer hold our grief in conscious thought—blocked in our heads. The pain is released through the tear ducts and our pores.⁹⁹ Sometimes the release comes the other way around. Sweat and ceremony lead to tears. Anita Valerio describes this process that occurred for her when she was sixteen, attending her first Indian sweat.¹⁰⁰

I cried inside that sweat, it seemed as though I could never stop crying as though my heart was being tugged at and finally torn loose

inside my chest. Other people cried too. So much emotion is expressed in the sweat and in the medicine lodge. And the weird thing about it is—you don't really know what it is you're crying about. The emotions seem to come out of some primeval cavity—some lonesome half-remembered place. It seems when I cried it was more than an individual pain. The weeping was all of our pain—a collective wound—it is larger than each individual. In the sweat it seems as though we all remember a past—a collective presence—our past as a Native people before being colonized and culturally liquidated.¹⁰¹

When we learn and share our documented and oral history, we can release our anger and tears with confidence—with the support of our ancestors, with the knowledge that we are neither crazy nor alone, not stupid or out of control. Insidious forms of oppression have brought us to this place and continue to exist, and we have a right to be furious about that. With these feelings no longer forbidden, we become eligible for true joy. This leads to more appropriate emotional responses to the events of day-to-day life, and lessens the desire to numb ourselves with various addictions.¹⁰²

Beyond what we do as individuals, says Juan Garcia-Castañón, “other interventions need to be made in both social, political, as well as psychological arenas.”¹⁰³ Lobbying for continued and improved mental health facilities and services, fighting the cuts in entitlement programs, offering greater services for PTSD and other stress disorders through community organizations are some things that can be done. Latino organizations and sympathetic foundations must recognize the need for the community to heal itself and to develop ongoing programs and necessary resources to deal with existing problems as well as preventing the spread of dysfunction from one generation to the next. One approach, Garcia-Castañón suggests, is through the school systems. Those can be used as a site for diagnosis and treatment as well as a channel for public funding. Such monies may already be funneled into these locations as drug and alcohol prevention subsidies or funds for the deterrence of gang-related activities. Both of these problems may be connected to PTSD and other forms of stress and dysfunction in the lives of the children. Thus, it makes sense to use this money for treatment and prevention programs.¹⁰⁴

A business or corporate approach to education, however, will never recognize the need to reduce the sources of insidious trauma in the lives of children. Consequently, organized political opposition and continuing public discourse against such management approaches are absolutely necessary. And this is our dilemma. Sustaining this kind of work is difficult for the healthiest of people. For those of us who are fragile and stressed to the limits by the demands and disparagement we face every day, taking on

such a task is both irrational *and* compulsory. (Is it any wonder we sometimes feel *loco*?) Yet this is our burden, and perhaps our gift—to be able to confront outrageous and damaging public issues as well as the savage mutilation within us at the same time.¹⁰⁵

Regaining the ability to create and maintain closeness and attachment, it is very likely that we will lessen the amount of dysfunction we pass on to our children and be in a better position to help them in their journeys through insensitive public institutions. If we improve our capacity for compassion, we can also help other people. Compassion makes it possible to forgive—to understand that we are all acting in the world with the tools and the strength we have available. Part of the healing process involves forgiving ourselves and those around us for all of the problems and unhealthy behaviors of which we have been a part. When we see dysfunctional behavior in action we must listen and respond through our knowledge of trauma and shame. And though we must set limits and protective barriers, we can perform in ways that do not increase the shame and guilt of others who are simply acting out of their own pain. We must know that some of the people who have hurt us are behaving defensively or coldly because they do not know how to behave otherwise. All of this is essential to being able to interact with sometimes difficult people in social and political organizations.

But forgiveness is not necessarily a simple action and must happen for the right reasons, as part of a recovery and/or healing process and a commitment to action. It cannot be done because we feel guilty, think it's the moral thing to do, simply to smooth surface relationships, or out of self-sacrifice. When the abusive behavior responsible for part of our “insidious trauma” (racism and sexism), is still occurring, we cannot be expected to forgive those who continue to harm us. This is one of the reasons that any kind of “therapy” we receive or engage in must be experientially and culturally embedded.¹⁰⁶

Sometimes our parents and guardians have had pain and experience in damaged families that have made it impossible for them to parent in healthy ways. We do not necessarily have to let them continue to bruise us, but it is in our best interest to forgive and feel compassion for them as human beings. Anzaldúa says, “We . . . can no longer let defenses and fences sprout around us. We can no longer withdraw. To rage and look upon you with contempt is to rage and be contemptuous of ourselves. We can no longer blame you.”¹⁰⁷ But it should always be clear that this forgiveness does not mean they can go on hurting us. Part of healing includes being able to set boundaries for our own protection. What it does mean is a movement away from holding so tightly to pain that we cannot release it.

In her piece “Notes on Oppression and Violence,” Aleticia Tijerina makes this choice to move from pain yet toward love. She talks about the way in which hatred and fear make us weak and leave us empty and alone,

whereas love makes us “alive with feelings.” It is a place in which we connect to others to “perform human acts,” building more love in the process. She closes the piece with the political implications of such a life choice, “Each moment we recall the vision of love *we commit an act of resistance against the oppressor.*” [emphasis in original]¹⁰⁸

Making this choice may require that we become our own protectors, nurturers, and givers of unconditional love if we find ourselves surrounded by those who cannot act responsibly. Networking with other healing or healthy people may be a part of the process. Seeking community support and alternative families is another strategy. Surrounding those who are not yet on the path, rather than excluding them, is always preferable, as long as we are not putting ourselves in harm’s way by doing so. When we define ourselves, we must remember that they are part of who we are. Though my father’s shame is not mine, it does play a role in how I respond to certain people. We cannot separate such people from our identities. Setting boundaries and protecting ourselves need not preclude intimacy, empathy, or compassion. We must learn to live knowing the battle will never be completely over, knowing that no human being is pain-free, but confident that we will not only survive historical and insidious traumas, but thrive as individuals and as a community.¹⁰⁹

Chéla Sandoval, a cultural critic interested in the formation of an oppositional consciousness, in response to social hierarchy, has said that women of color share an understanding of how power works. This understanding allows us to identify experiential peers and potential political allies.¹¹⁰ What we know of power makes manifest our ability to empathize with the sorrows of others dominated by it. We recognize historical mutilation in one another. This means that if we can learn to heal—to make good use of our pain, memory, and rage—the potential for strong and lasting alliances in various political struggles may well become a reality.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. Rosemary Catacalos, “(There Has To Be) Something More than Everything,” *Daughters of the Fifth Sun: A Collection of Latina Fiction and Poetry*, ed. Bryce Milligan, Mary Guerrero Mulligan, and Angela de Hoyas (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), 58.
2. Demetria Martínez, “The Conquest,” in *Chicana (W)rites on Word and Film*, ed. Maria Herrera-Sobek and Helena María Viramontes (Berkeley: Third Woman, 1995).
3. Melba Vasquez, for instance, tells us that “a person who is subjected to a great deal of racist treatment can be afflicted by powerlessness, learned helplessness, depression, anxiety, and even post-traumatic stress disorder.” Melba J. T. Vasquez, “Latinas,” in *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Identities in Psychotherapy*, ed. Lillian Comas-Díaz and Beverly Greene (New York: Guilford, 1994), 343. These symptoms, of course, can also result from repeated exposure to a variety of oppressive mechanisms. See also Elena Avila, “La Llorona Has Found Her Children,” in *Chicano Studies: Critical Connection between Research and Community*, ed. Teresa Córdova (National Association for Chicano Studies, 1992) on the effect of trauma on individuals in our community. A psychiatric nurse and *curandera*, Avila uses her knowledge of psychology and her culturally based healing practices and ceremonies to work with patients suffering from PTSD. Manuel Ramirez, III, has written articles and a text titled *Multicultural/Multiracial Psychology: Mestizo Perspectives in Personality and Mental Health* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1998), that also touch on the subject of how history and contemporary racism combine to shape the Mexican American psyche. Published in 1995, Eduardo and Bonnie Duran’s book, *Native American Post-Colonial Psychology*, includes an extensive section on post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Native Americans and how it is passed on to succeeding generations. Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran, *Native American Post-Colonial Psychology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). See also the work that Black feminist writer bell hooks has been doing on love. In the last chapter of her book, *Outlaw Culture*, for instance, she discusses the way that trauma has played out in the African American community. In 1998, the Durans teamed up with Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart to contribute an article titled, “Native American and the Trauma of History” to a collection edited by Russell Thornton called, *Studying Native America: Problems and Perspectives*. Syndicated newspaper columnist Roberto Rodríguez (who had attended my paper presentation at NACCS) has also explored this topic. The victim of police brutality, Rodríguez has done a lot of thinking about the links between rage and the need to heal psychologically from trauma that can be linked both to history and contemporary racism. Most recently, as I was in the final stages of

- preparing this manuscript for publication (and to make late use of them), I ran across two articles by historian Yolanda Chávez Leyva in the September and October issues of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center's newsletter. She is working on a larger project, which I assume will become a book at some point.
4. Renato Rosaldo, personal conversation, Mexico City, NACCS Conference, 1998.
 5. Ana Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1995), 148.
 6. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1987), 3.
 7. Elena Avila, "La Llorona Has Found Her Children," *Chicano Studies: Critical Connection between Research and Community*, ed. Teresa Córdova (National Association for Chicano Studies, 1992), 68.
 8. Root includes emotional abuse, racism, anti-Semitism, poverty, heterosexism, dislocation, ageism, and so forth among the stress factors that lead to "insidious trauma." She says the effects are cumulative and compounded by experience over the course of a lifetime. Maria P. P. Root, "Reconstructing the Impact of Trauma on Personality," in *Personality and Psychotherapy*, ed. L. S. Brown and M. Ballou (New York: Guilford, 1992).
 9. Root "Reconstructing the Impact"; Olivia M. Espín, in "Feminist Approaches," in *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Identities in Psychotherapy*, ed. Lillian Comas-Díaz and Beverly Greene (New York: Guilford, 1994), 268–269.
 10. Examples of events that might cause post-traumatic stress: witnessing the killing of a spiritual leader or someone thought to be a caretaker or protector; having family members disappear who are later found brutally murdered; witnessing the severing of body parts, beheadings, hangings, and rapes (especially of a parent or child); seeing the murder or beating of a parent or child; experiencing the loss of more than one family member at a time, or of a significant portion of your community; witnessing or experiencing torture and persecution, solitary exile or confinement, or gang rape; imprisonment without cause and police brutality. Though mainstream people tend to think of such things in association with other countries, many of these events have been part of our history, and continue to be the reality for many people living in the United States. Juan García-Castañón and Gordon G. Cappelletty, "A Preliminary Report on Continuous-Traumatic Stress in a Northern California Central American Refugee Community," in *Community Empowerment and Chicano Scholarship*, ed. Mary Romero and Cordelia Candelaria (Berkeley, CA: National Association for Chicano Studies, 1992), 91–92.
 11. Avila, "La Llorona," 68.
 12. Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well Read Person, Could Believe in the War between the Races," in *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990), 4–5.
 13. Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers*, 156.
 14. Alentía Tijerina, "Notes on Oppression and Violence," in *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990), 171–172.
 15. For examples, see Gloria Anzaldúa's "Coatlicue State," in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1987); Lucha Corpi, *Delia's Song* (Houston: Arte Público, 1989); the short story, "Caribou Cafe" in Helena Viramontes, *The Moths and Other Stories* (Houston: Arte Público, 1985); and "One Holy Night," in *Woman Hollering Creek*, ed. Sandra Cisneros (New York: Random House, 1991).
 16. Pat Mora, *Nepantla: Essays from the Land in the Middle* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1993), 107.
 17. Gloria Anzaldúa, "El día de la chicana," *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 82.
 18. See George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).
 19. Jeanette Rodríguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas, 1994), 69.
 20. Emma Pérez, "Gulf Dreams," *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*, ed. Carla Trujillo (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 1991), 105.
 21. Chertie Moraga, *The Last Generation: Prose and Poetry* (Boston: South End Press, 1993), 187.
 22. See Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers*.
 23. Irene I. Blea, *La Chicana and the Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender* (New York: Praeger, 1992), 36.
 24. Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military: Myth and History* (Austin: University of Texas, 1990), 25–35; Antonia I. Castañeda, "The Political Economy of Nineteenth Century Stereotypes of Californianas," *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History*, ed. Adelaida R. Del Castillo (Encino, CA: Floricanto Press, 1990), 213–228. Elizabeth Salas tells us that this shift in gendered deities was an "uneven process." As one might guess, it did not take place overnight. Aztec elite, who were not without opposition, first had to ruin the reputation of the Earth Mothers, turning them into monsters. Salas, *Soldaderas*, 5–6.
 25. For an expanded discussion of these processes, see James Diego Vigil, *From Indians to Chicanos: The Dynamics of Mexican American Culture* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1980).
 26. Vigil, *From Indians to Chicanos*, 9, 16–34; Nancy Boyd-Franklin and Nydia García-Preto, "Family Therapy: A Closer Look at African American and Hispanic Women," in *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Identities in Psychotherapy*, ed. Lillian Comas-Díaz and Beverly Greene (New York: Guilford, 1994), 239–262; Joan W. Moore, *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 11–68.
 27. Mary Clearing Sky, "Historic Trauma and Unresolved Grieving in Native American Populations," Paper presented at the CIC Conference University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana 31 October, 1992; Maria Felix-Ortiz and Michael D. Newcomb, "Risk and Protective Factors for Drug Use Among Latino and White Adolescents," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 14, no. 3 (August 1992): 292–293.
 28. Camela Jaramillo "Postscript," *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990), 78.
 29. Rodríguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 1, Vigil, *From Indians to Chicanos*, 6–7.
 30. Lourdes Torres, "The Construction of the Self in U.S. Latina Autobiographies," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 275.
 31. See Tucsona writer Silviana Wood's story "Dreams by Appointment Only," in *Woman of Her Word: Hispanic Women Write* (2nd ed.), ed. Evangelina Vigil (Houston: Arte Público, 1987) for a poignant look at the psychological hoops through which Latinas on welfare must jump—even with well-intentioned social workers.
 32. Clearing Sky, "Historic Trauma"; Avila, "La Llorona," 69; Beverly Engel MFCC, *The Right to Innocence: Healing the Trauma of Childhood Sexual Abuse* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, 1989), 184–188.
 33. Espín, "Feminist Approaches," 269.
 34. Clearing Sky, "Historic Trauma"; Espín, "Feminist Approaches," 268–269; Beverly Greene, "Lesbian Women of Color: Triple Jeopardy," in *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Identities in Psychotherapy*, ed. Lillian Comas-Díaz and Beverly Greene (New York: Guilford, 1994).
 35. Carey McWilliams dealt with this denial of the true history in Chapter 2, "The Fantasy Heritage" in *North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (New York: Greenwood, 1968). Carl Gutiérrez-Jones approaches the problem through literature and art—analyzing representations that hide the true nature of Anglo American conquest history. In his book, *Rethinking the Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), Gutiérrez-Jones calls the chapter "Mission Denial: The Development of Historical Amnesia." See also, Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920–1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1992).
 36. Corpi, *Delia's Song*, 157–158.
 37. Though many Native American and Chicana scholars have found his analysis problematic, see Ramón Gutiérrez's, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991). Although he fails to fully explore the violence with which the Spanish incorporated or dispensed with Indian people, he does present a picture of the Catholic concepts that

- attempted to teach shame and guilt. In Antonia I. Castañeda's contribution "Sexual Violence in the Politics and Policies of Conquest: Amerindian Women and the Spanish Conquest of Alta California," in *Building with Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies*, ed. Adela de la Torre and Beatriz M. Pesquera (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), we learn of some of the despicable acts committed against Indian women by the Spanish. She quotes a passage in a letter written by Fray Junipero Serra from the northern frontier in 1773 to the Viceroy in Mexico City, in which he describes the morning ritual of soldiers who would ride out to the rancherías. As the people fled at the sight of them, the soldiers would lasso Indian women, who were then raped in front of men, who were shot if they attempted to rescue the women. Serra's letters, Castañeda tells us, are typical of many others, of journal entries, and histories written by Spanish chroniclers Bernal Díaz del Castillo and Bartolomé de las Casas "Sexual Violence in the Politics and Policies of Conquest" (15). Attacks on women, she tells us in another article, were "the first recorded acts of Spanish domination and aggression." Antonia I. Castañeda, "Presidarias y Pobladoras: The Journey North and Life in Frontier California," in *Chicana Critical Issues*, ed. Norma Alarcón, et al., *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social* (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 1993), 78.
38. See also Tey Diana Rebolledo, "Mujeres Andariegas: Good Girls and Bad," 9 in *Women Singing in the Snow: A Cultural Analysis of Chicana Literature* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1995), for the legacy of Spanish/Catholic thought on women, women's bodies as the site of sin, and the construction of "good" and "bad" images for women. See Patricia Preciado Martin, *Songs My Mother Sang to Me: An Oral History of Mexican-American Women* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1992) for a look at how women's lives were conducted within this social order, during the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
 39. Douglas Monroy, *Thrown among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 435–440; Castañeda, "Presidarias y Pobladoras," 73–94; Rodríguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe* 1–14.
 40. Sandra Cisneros, "Guadalupe the Sex Goddess: Unearthing the Racy Past of Mexico's Most Famous Virgin," *Ms* (July/September 1996), 44.
 41. Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers*, 70.
 42. Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers*, 71.
 43. Not all Chicana Lesbians experience a horrified reaction from their families when coming out. Many factors can intervene to mitigate the effect of traditional Spanish/Catholic teachings. Families may be more enlightened through their own insights and previous experiences, the existence of homosexuality already in (and out in) the family, through acculturation or education, and through empathy and the recognition of oppression. In a poem titled "Mother," Odilia Mendez tells of her mother's subjugation and abuse by her father. At the end she says, "I put my arms around you and love you, Mother, / hoping that I can love as well as you . . . when you need me the most. / To women, from separate worlds / made from the same clay. / I reveal my lovers to you, Mother, and you don't object. / You tell me you know that I am different." Odilia Mendez, "Mother," in *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians—An Anthology* (New York: Latina Lesbian History Project, 1987), 168. Juanita M. Sánchez tells a similar story in her poem "Paso a paso." In it she describes all the things various members of her family wanted her to do, and how she simply took her own path. She ends the poem hinting at their disappointment, but finding acceptance, nonetheless. "nothing turned out like / they wanted but / my mother did say, / if you want to be with a woman, / que le hace, as long as you're happy." Juanita Sánchez, "Paso a paso," in *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*, ed. Carla Trujillo (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 1991), 15. Aleticia Tijerina, "I am the Lost Daughter of My Mama's House," in *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians—An Anthology* (New York: Latina Lesbian History Project, 1987), 38.
 44. Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 10.
 45. See also E. D. Hernández, "Discussion, Discourse and Direction: The Dilemmas of a Chicana Lesbian," Emma Pérez, "Sexuality and Discourse: Notes from a Chicana Survivor," Carla Trujillo's "Chicana Lesbians: Fear and Loathing in the Chicano Community," *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*, ed. Carla Trujillo (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 1991).
 46. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 21.
 47. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 20.
 48. Clearing Sky, "Historic Trauma," Engel; *Right to Innocence*, 9–16.
 49. Marina Rivera, "Mestiza," in *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature*, ed. Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1993), 99.
 50. Clearing Sky, "Historic Trauma," Engel, 41–84.
 51. Clearing Sky, "Historic Trauma."
 52. This is currently being debated in psychotherapy literature. One school sees shame and guilt as distinctly separate categories of cognitive, affective response. Another sees guilt as simply another manifestation of shame, which is categorized as one of nine innate affects. For the first view, see Stuart Schneiderman, *Saving Face: America and the Politics of Shame* (New York: Knopf, 1995). For the second view, see Gershen Kaufman, *Shame: The Power of Caring* (Rochester, VT: Schenkman, 1992).
 53. Vicki Underland-Rosow, *Shame: Spiritual Suicide* (Shorewood, MN: Waterford Publications, 1996). Also available at www.ic.mankato.mn.us/web/shame/shame.html.
 54. Kaufman, *Shame*, 73.
 55. Cervantes, "Poem for the Young," 4–5.
 56. Gloria Anzaldúa, "La Prieta," *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983), 201.
 57. Carmen Morones, "Grace," in *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives of Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation, 1990), 243.
 58. See the chapter "It Is Painful" in Tomás Rivera's, *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1995), for an example. Here, the son is fearful and ashamed because he has been suspended from school after hitting a white boy who has been taunting him with racial slurs. He feels shame because his going to school has been so important to his family, and he feels he is letting them all down—and also that he may be living up to the criticism of Mexicans in general by not going to school. Rudolfo A. Anaya, in *Bless Me Ultima* (Berkeley: TQS Publications, 1972), tells of a similar incident in the life of his protagonist Antonio.
 59. See Schneiderman's *Saving Face* in which he traces the philosophies of Alexander Hamilton (who believed in capital and free trade markets, as well as industry, but placed the nation over individual states rights) and Thomas Jefferson (who favored individual liberty and democracy). Schneiderman uses the work of Alexis de Tocqueville to show how shame in the United States has been used to promote hard labor and the cohesiveness of the family unit in service to Hamilton's and Jefferson's views.
 60. See Thomas L. Dumm, *Democracy and Punishment: Disciplinary Origins of the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 6.
 61. See Alfredo Mirandé, *Gringo Justice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987.)
 62. Kaufman, *Shame*, xiii.
 63. Kaufman, *Shame*, 37.
 64. Clearing Sky, "Historic Trauma"; Lillian Comas-Díaz, "Feminist Therapy with Hispanic/Latina Women: Myth or Reality?" in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Racism and Sexism*, ed. Lenora Fulani (New York: Harrington Press, 1988), 39–59.
 65. Clearing Sky, "Historic Trauma."
 66. "Repeated attacks on our native tongue diminish our sense of self. The attacks continue throughout our lives . . . if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself . . . I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself." Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 58–59. Melba J. T. Vasquez, "Latinas," in *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Identities in Psychotherapy*, ed. Lillian Comas-Díaz and Beverly Greene (New York: Guilford, 1994), 121–122.
 67. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 58.
 68. Comas-Díaz, "Feminist Therapy," 43–42.
 69. Similar tensions can also occur between Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. Mexicans may also be from elite families and fail to empathize with Chicanas/os. Or if they have been extremely economically deprived, they may see life in the United States as so much better than they might have had at home that they whole-heartedly embrace the culture (to which they have yet to assimilate). There are, of course, many poor Mexicans who

- come here knowing both possibilities—that they are economically better off here in the United States, but who also recognize the flaws in U.S. society around race, class, gender, and sexual identity. These people are likely to know the social and economic history of the United States from a Mexican perspective and thus quickly adopt much of Chicana/o political ideology.
70. A study done on a Central American community in California showed that about one-third of the subjects had definite PTSD symptoms. Another third met some of the criteria. And the final third had “no manifestation of the disorder at all.” I have no formal statistics or evidence of a similar study among Mexican Americans, so I cannot say that this three-way split applies. I would guess that the percentage of those actually suffering from PTSD is less than 33 percent because Mexican Americans are not currently refugees of the kind of violence that has taken place in Central America in the past twenty years. But, I do think at various times in our history it has been in greater evidence—though we were not testing for such things in 1848, 1910, or 1930. My concern is for the way in which the legacy of traumatic events and the associated psychological damage has continued to mark us as a people, as well as the way in which our social conditions maintain, (re)create, and reinforce that suffering. Even for those of us who exhibit only remnants of the original anxiety, we should be aware of how it might make us vulnerable to contemporary stress in equally harmful ways. García-Castañón and Cappelletty tell us that individuals who meet only some of the criteria are still at risk for developing the disorder in the future given the right circumstances. Juan García-Castañón and Gordon G. Cappelletty, “A Preliminary Report on Continuous-Traumatic Stress in a Northern California Central American Refugee Community,” in *Community Empowerment and Chicano Scholarship*, ed. Mary Romero and Cordelia Candelaria (Berkeley, CA: National Association for Chicano Studies, 1992), 93. Clearing Sky, “Historic Trauma,” Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 3–16; García-Castañón and Cappelletty, “A Preliminary Report,” 93; American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-III: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, (3rd ed., rev.) (Washington, DC: APA, 1988), 247.
71. Clearing Sky, “Historic Trauma,” Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 94–96.
72. Without soul you are without hope. You cannot take heart or be encouraged by anything. Gloria Anzaldúa, “Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar or Island: Lesbians-of-Color Hacienda Alianzas,” in *Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances*, ed. Lisa Albrecht and Rose M. Brewer (Philadelphia: New Society, 1990), 229.
73. Clearing Sky, “Historic Trauma,” Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 9–16.
74. Jaramillo, “Postscript” 78.
75. Kaufman, *Shame*, 73–75.
76. Avila, “La Llorona,” 68.
77. Clearing Sky, “Historic Trauma,” APA, *DSM-III*.
78. Clearing Sky, “Historic Trauma.”
79. As scholars, Chicanos trained in traditional methods, who either felt a natural affinity with these conventions or had no choice but to conform in order to succeed in the academy, may also respond dismissively out of the perception that they are being attacked, blamed, or betrayed by Chicanas. Women writers and theorists who expose the emotional force in the culture and the ways in which gender is (often painfully) inscribed in ethnicity can be dismissed for our lack of objectivity, trivialized for dealing with the psychological effects of pain rather than purely political or economic issues (as if the “human factor” were unimportant to such things). We may be ignored for not producing concrete data or purely descriptive history. While this can be a simple disagreement about scholarly methods, it may also be a way of avoiding the pain and the reality of the damage that has been inflicted. But there is another dimension to their criticism. This can be an example of internalized shame that is capable of autonomously activating through an inner or self-perceived cue, rather than an external one. In his book *Rethinking the Borderlands*, Carl Gutiérrez-Jones presents the problem of editors and teachers ignoring Chicana representations of male violence against women, either because it upsets proud nationalistic illusions of a united voice or because it betrays the romantic image of the nurturing community. But, he says, how are women to write about oppression without addressing one of its “most blatant expressions: rape?” Gutiérrez-Jones, *Rethinking the Borderlands*, 110.
80. Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 7.
81. Of course we also see these painful things in the prose, poetry, and autobiographies of male writers. But male theorists, critics, historians, and so forth do not generally see this subjective experience or expression as an appropriate topic for “objective” scholarship. Though this too is changing as men begin to see, understand, and deal with their own wounds, as well as their ambivalence around the social constructions of masculinity.
82. See Gloria Anzaldúa's confrontation with what she calls the “shadow beast,” in *Borderlands/La Frontera*.
83. Avila, “La Llorona,” 68.
84. Avila, “La Llorona,” 69.
85. Edna Escamill, “Corazon de una anciana,” in *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa, (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990), 133.
86. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 87, 88.
87. Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 48; Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*.
88. Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 87.
89. Avila, “La Llorona,” 68.
90. Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 88; Espín, “Feminist Approaches,” 273–274; Lillian Comas-Díaz and Beverly Greene, “Connections and Disconnections” and “Gender and Ethnicity in the Healing Process,” in *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Identities in Psychotherapy*, ed. Lillian Comas-Díaz and Beverly Greene (New York: Guilford, 1994), 364–366; Vasquez, “Latinas,” 134.
91. If as children we express anger and are berated for doing so in a way that makes us feel we are bad (rather than teaching us that our action was an inappropriate expression of anger), we may begin to interpret things that make us angry as cues to respond with shame. This confusion can carry over into adulthood if we express anger and our feelings are ignored or trivialized. In order to respond in healthy ways, we must tune our affective system to recognize and value genuine anger, rather than to automatically respond with shame. Kaufman, *Shame*, 44–45.
92. Kaufman, *Shame*, 44–45; Comas-Díaz and Greene, *Women of Color*, 378; Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 91.
93. Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 92.
94. Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 91; Espín, “Feminist Approaches,” 273–274; Comas-Díaz and Greene, *Women of Color*, 364–366; Vasquez, “Latinas,” 134.
95. This type of response to the world may also be primarily or secondarily the result of chemical imbalance in the brain, linked with or separate from traumatic events or memories.
96. See Bruno Bettelheim and M. Janowitz, *The Dynamics of Prejudice* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), 108.
97. Avila, “La Llorona,” 69.
98. Luis J. Rodríguez, *Always Running—La Vida Loca: Gang Days in L.A.* (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1993).
99. Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 1982.
100. In the past several years, many Chicanas/os have been invited by Native Americans to take part in sweats and other healing or visionary rituals. Some choose to participate out of a deep sense of returning to some lost part of their indigenous culture; others, like whites, are desperately searching for spirituality outside organized Western or Eastern religions. Some of us choose not to embark on this journey, feeling that it is not something that belongs to us. It is a road with many pitfalls and must be traveled carefully and with respect. In discussing this with several Native Americans, most of them Lakota, Dakota, or Ojibway, some are welcoming, others puzzled, and some wary of Mexican American motivations. But a Navajo friend dismissed it immediately and finally, saying, “They can't sweat out their Spanish blood.” *Donde hay amor, hay dolor*. (Where there is love, there is pain.) While I understand this sentiment, it is still very painful to contemplate.
101. Anita Valerio, “It's in My Blood, My Face—My Mother's Voice, the Way I Sweat,” *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (2nd ed.) ed. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983), 43.
102. Clearing Sky, “Historic Trauma,” Engel, *Right to Innocence*.
103. García-Castañón and Cappelletty, “A Preliminary Report,” 95.
104. García-Castañón and Cappelletty, “A Preliminary Report,” 97–98.

105. Clearly this is not possible for all people. Some are only in a position to focus on physical and/or psychological survival. But those of us who have the energy and resources to be self-reflexive should not have to apologize for doing so. This is worthwhile and we can be more help to others if we are healthy. Self-protection sometimes means saying "no" to all those requests on our time and creative energy. Elena Avila writes that, "The high drive pace that the dominant society tempts us with is making us ill. Let us call upon the courage that it takes to remember all of who we are and beckon our souls back home" ("La Llorona," 69).
106. Espin, "Feminist Approaches," 269; Clearing Sky, "Historic Trauma,"; Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 142–156.
107. Anzaldúa, "El día de la chicana," 82.
108. Tijerina, "I am the Lost Daughter," 173.
109. Clearing Sky, "Historic Trauma,"; Engel, *Right to Innocence*, 48–50, 129–170.
110. Chéla Sandoval, "Feminism and Racism: A Report on the 1981 National Women's Studies Association Conference," in *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives of Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation, 1990), 63.

Chapter 2

1. Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked How I, An Intelligent, Well-Read Person Could Believe in a War between the Races," in *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature*, ed. Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 286–287.
2. Masao Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance in the Global Economy," in *Cultural Readings of Imperialism: Edward Said and the Gravity of History*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson, Benita Parry, and Judith Squires (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 49.
3. Nasrin Jewell, "Women and Work: Irani Women in the Global Economy," Public lecture for the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies Colloquium Series. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 8 November 1999.
4. The All-American Disney Corporation for instance, operates its cruise line out of U.S. ports and profits primarily from U.S. travelers. But its ships are registered as a freight company in another country in order to avoid paying U.S. corporate taxes.
5. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 49.
6. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 49.
7. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 50.
8. Joreen's theory is that structurelessness does not exist, that without deliberate and formal organization, any group will structure itself. The strong or most aggressive will establish unquestioned authority over others and the structurelessness itself will mask this power that has no obligation to anyone else. Joreen, *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* (Pittsburgh, PA: Know, Inc., 1986).
9. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 50.
10. Ziauddin Sardar and Borin Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies* (New York: Totem Books, 1998), 164.
11. In their book *Introducing Cultural Studies* Sardar and Van Loon tell us that Malaysian born intellectual Anwar Ibrahim posits the theory that the strength of Asian cultures could create a kind of symbiosis between the East and West. This would result in a mutually enriching global culture that would replace the current exploitive form of globalization.
12. José Burciaga, *Drink Cultura* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1993), 57.
13. Sardar and Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, 165.
14. "Anzaldúa to Serrros" represents for me a historical, generational, and theoretical continuum, which includes Ana Castillo, Cherríe Moraga, Denise Chávez, Pat Mora, Sandra Cisneros, and Diana García among others.
15. Sardar and Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, 166–167.
16. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 55.
17. Sardar and Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, 162–163.
18. Sardar and Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, 162–163.
19. Sardar and Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, 162.

20. Sardar and Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, 162–163.
21. Sardar and Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, 162.
22. Sardar and Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, 163.
23. Ben Agger, *Cultural Studies as Critical Theory* (London: Falmer Press, 1992), 173.
24. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 53.
25. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 53.
26. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 53.
27. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 54.
28. Sardar and Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, 9.
29. I am thinking of people like Adam Smith, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud, Lacan, Sausure, Gramsci, Lévi-Strauss, Habermas, Jameson, Adorno, Marcuse, Derrida, Foucault, Fanon, Bahba, Spivak, Said, Showalter, Hartmann, Cixous, Irigaray, Anzaldúa, hooks, Gilroy, Rosaura Sánchez, Sandoval, and so forth.
30. Stuart Sim and Borin Van Loon, *Introducing Critical Theory* (New York: Totem Books, 2001), 20 Sardar and Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, 9.
31. Sim and Van Loon, *Introducing Critical Theory*, 164.
32. Agger, *Cultural Studies*, 153, 170.
33. Debra Castillo, "Response Cutting/edge," in *Latin American Women's Writing: Feminist Readings in Theory and Crisis* (New York: Clarndon Press/Oxford, 1996), 216.
34. Castillo, "Response," 216; Deborah McDowell, "Interview with Susan Fraiman," *Critical Texts: A Review of Theory and Criticism* 6, no. 3: 13–29.
35. Edén Torres, "Ella que tiene jefes y no los ve, se queda en cueros," in *Is Academic Feminism Dead? Theory and Practice*, ed. Social Justice Group at the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies, University of Minnesota (New York: NYU Press, 2000).
36. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 55.
37. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 55.
38. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 62.
39. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 62.
40. Castillo, "Response," 218–219.
41. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 62.
42. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 59.
43. The student goes by one name, Thane. I believe she said this in a feminist pedagogy grad seminar.
44. Castillo, "Response," 218–219.
45. Chéla Sandoval, "Theorizing White Consciousness for a Post-Empire World: Barthes, Fanon, and the Rhetoric of Love," in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 92.
46. Sandoval, "Theorizing," 92.
47. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 56.
48. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 59.
49. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 59.
50. Agger, *Cultural Studies*, 154.
51. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 59.
52. Agger, *Cultural Studies*, 154.
53. Agger, *Cultural Studies*, 154.
54. Agger, *Cultural Studies*, 154.
55. Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Suzanne Pharr, *Homophobia—A Weapon of Sexism* (Little Rock, AR: Chardon Press, 1988), 53–64.
56. Pharr, *Homophobia*, 57.
57. Castillo, "Response," 219–220; Gayatri Spivak, "Theory in the Margin: Coetzee's *Foe* reading Defoe's *Crusoe/Roxana*," in *Consequences of Theory*, ed. Jonathan Arac and Barbara Johnson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 166.
58. Agger, *Cultural Studies*, 169.
59. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 62.
60. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 62.
61. Miyoshi, "Sites of Resistance," 62–63.
62. Agger, *Cultural Studies*, 5.
63. Sandoval, "Theorizing," 102.