

**THE CHICANA M(OTHER)WORK ANTHOLOGY.** Edited by Cecilia Caballero, Yvette Martínez-Vu, Judith Pérez-Torres, Michelle Téllez, and Christine Vega. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019. 336 pages. Paperback \$24.95.

An initial ofrenda (offering) to all mothers sets the spiritual tone for this anthology by Chicana, Indigenous, and women of color mother-scholars. As stated by the Chicana M(other)work Collective, “Our labor is our prayer, our mothering is our offering” (3). The voices of women enacting Chicana m(other)work are central to this anthology, which presents the life lessons of mothers, and what Patricia Hill Collins calls “othermothers,” in higher education and in communities (*Black Feminist Thought*, Unwin Hyman, 1990). These Chicana m(other)work autohistorias act as a guide for understanding mothering as a form of revolutionary praxis dedicated to bettering the lives of the Seven Generations. Gathering research and testimonios, the editors have divided the collection thematically into four sections centering on struggle and violence, activism, intergenerational mothering, and the intricacies of pregnancy and reproductive justice. Contributors to the anthology include artists, teachers, students, and academic administrators, all of whom share a united identity as mother-activists.

In each auto-ethnographic section, the authors use storytelling as a platform for social justice by integrating acts of witnessing, memory, and “knowledge creation” into testimonios (9). Paying tribute to Dolores Delgado Bernal and the Latina Feminist Group, they describe the importance of using testimonios as a method for understanding sociopolitical and historical complexities embedded in the lived experiences of women of color. Additionally, the editors acknowledge Chicana and feminist foremothers of color who have influenced the anthology’s theoretical framework with specific constructs that include, among others, Gloria Anzaldúa’s “body-mindspirit” and “Coyolxauhqui Imperative” and Patricia Hill Collins’s “motherwork.” Throughout the text, Chicana m(other)work takes shape as a political form of carework that advances justice and liberation by bridging cultural knowledge from women of color, Indigenous, and Chicana epistemologies. More broadly, the collection renders Chicana m(other)work as a multidimensional construct embodying a communal and holistic aesthetic.

The first part of the book speaks to systemic violence, specifically against Indigenous, Brown, and Black mothers, and its high impact on families of color. Linking motherhood and migration, the testimonios of Chicanas and Latinas as border crossers provide counternarratives to state-sanctioned policies. Five essays by six contributors compose this section, titled "Separation, Migration, State Violence, and Detention." The first testimonio shares the lived experiences of a gang-affiliated, Chicana teen mom who is now an academic, introducing readers to the epistemology and agency of a "Brown woman's body" in resistance to state violence. The next piece, framed as a mother-daughter herstory, sheds light on the silent darkness surrounding rape, survival, and abortion. Through this interweaving of mother-daughter stories, the author suggests that voicing firsthand accounts of sexual violence and abortion will help overcome the tradition of silence surrounding these topics. The third entry in this section is a testimonio dedicated to urban migration, mothering, and teaching, and what the author refers to as "tracing coordinates." She explains "coordinates" as symbolic of both place and action, and she connects these coordinates to "specific classed and racialized geographies" with forms of motherwork as a way of mapping out intergenerational mothering across borders (60).

The fourth essay in part 1, "Fierce Mamas Rising," centers the experiences of mothers, the stereotypes of "good" versus "bad" mothers, and the praxis of being a mother while incarcerated or after being convicted. Here, fierce mothering serves as a counternarrative to ideal mothering and pushes against limitations regarding motherhood. For example, fierce mothering disrupts the ways in which mothering is viewed as an individual act by discussing aspects of other-mothering, such as by siblings or neighbors, thus drawing from the concept of communal motherwork. The final entry in this section focuses on the herstories of Chicana/Latina mothers in community college, using a framework of "sobrevivencia" to signify the "beyondness" of how they walk through life as student-mothers (100).

The anthology's second part centralizes the experiences of Chicana/Latina/women of color mother-activists and begins with Black revolutionary motherwork in the testimonio "Ain't I a Mama?" Sharing stories of exclusion as a Black mother in the workplace and in the feminist movement, the author discusses her creation of "Parenting for Liberation" as a space for parents of color who are "freedom fighting for our collective liberation" (126). This idea of parents as freedom fighters is reiterated in the following piece, in which four mother-scholars of color (MSOC) describe mothering in academia. Their testimonios of their experiences as student-mothers

reveal that MSOCs thrive by balancing their mother and scholar identities and practicing self-validation and empowerment. The authors conclude by calling for inclusive practices geared toward ending the marginalization of scholar-parents and creating liberatory spaces for celebrating motherhood in higher education, as opposed to condemning it.

The next two entries in this section share insights into motherwork alongside liberation work and constructions of “other-mothering” in academia. An example of other-mothering is advocating for Chicana and Latina colleagues “in their work as mothers and academics” through support, care, and encouragement (162). One author outlines a “homemade theory” dedicated to those “working to transform our society” (146–47), reminiscent of José Esteban Muñoz’s quest for a “queer utopia” (*Cruising Utopia*, New York University Press, 2009). The theory is “mama academic liberadora activista (MALA),” and it includes five tenets: “modeled hope, audacious love, determination, relentless resilience, and emancipation (MADRE).” The theory and tenets align with testimonios shared in the following chapter regarding Chicana mothering and other-mother alliances. Specifically, the implications of love, resistance, and radicalness flow through both pieces in connection with motherwork and Chicana academic liberation. As described by the author, MALA MADRE entails the praxis of negotiating personal intentions regarding passion, career, family (including children and community), and time in the context of being a “Mama-Scholar” while consciously embodying “liberatory critical hope” (157). Overall, what ties these stories together is the praxis of m(other)work by women of color educators for the betterment of all, including colleagues, community and family members, and students. In essence, the feminism of fierce mothering in conjunction with other-mothering creates a synergy of academic activism.

The third part of the collection honors intergenerational mothering, beginning with an essay that considers mother-daughter spirituality as a pedagogical modality. The author explains, “A Chicana motherdaughter spiritual praxis is grounded in Anzaldúa’s idea that we are all connected to one another and as such should work together to improve the world” (198). The authors offer a utopic vision that is antiracist, honors Indigenous ways of knowing, and provides spaces for revolutionary love (157). The following entry in part 3 is a co-created testimonio, “Enseñanzas de Mi Madre,” that centers the connections between Chicana mothers and daughters as constantly shifting and changing the construct of motherhood. The shared story speaks directly to the creativity needed to maintain mother-daughter bonds

when distance and differences in life experiences, such as graduate studies, occur. The author refers to the creation of mother-daughter digital conexiones as “digital tellings,” the daily practices of communication via telephone, video chats, and text messages (214). These interactions, whether digital or in person, provide spaces for sharing cultural knowledge between mothers and daughters via simple “kitchen table” style conversations.

In the next chapter, intergenerational pláticas between the author and her two daughters, mother, and grandmother—four generations—engender an Indigenous-based philosophy and provide readers with an applied understanding of what bodymindspirit engagement entails. Relating to borderlands positionality, the author describes the matrilineal power stemming from her great-great-grandmother as being both Indigenous and shaped by a curandera-guerrera (healer-warrior) decolonial feminist mindset. In the spirit of the curandera-guerrera, she calls for “developing one’s abilities to be a healer *and* a warrior in the face of oppression” (238). The final piece in this section is also dedicated to decolonial praxis, referred to as “decolonial P’urhépecha maternalista feminista motherwork and pedagogy” (243). In it, the author shares the process of giving birth and says that the desire to protect her daughter from sexual assault triggered her PTSD. She discusses how the pain she endured led to her connection with the “curandera magic” in her blood, and speaking as an academic, she shares her Xicanista wisdom with students in the form of motherwork and pedagogy. The autohistoria ends with a message: “As academic Mothers of Color, our labor is not contained in neatly categorized boxes. Motherwork becomes part of our intersectionality, as mothering and motherhood permeate our homes, writing, and pedagogy” (258).

Part 4 of the anthology is the briefest, and yet the most heartfelt and brave. “Loss, Reproductive Justice, and Holistic Pregnancy” features the testimonios of three contributors, as well as a collaborative chapter by two of the volume editors and their academic comadres. The section begins with a personal story centering on adoption and includes the voices of women who cannot physically bear children, as well as women who choose not to become mothers. The author identifies as a “Chicana mother of adoption” and shares her testimonio of reproductive loss and the labor, physical and emotional, of preparing for adoption (265). The testimonio also discusses miscarriage alongside the process of decolonizing the womb and “birthing healing justice.” Here the institutionalized practice of birthing is critiqued in what the author calls “the medical-industrial complex” (275). Linking to the previous section on intergenerational motherwork, this chapter enacts

the healing ways of knowing embodied by grandmothers. By reclaiming and revitalizing these understandings, the author validates “an epistemology of body as earth” as a form of radical healing praxis surrounding “birth through ceremony” (279).

Moving into the collaboratively written piece, the focus shifts to an overall “fierce mothering” challenge against the exclusion and invisibility of mothers of color in spaces of higher learning (288). The two editors and their colleagues call themselves Mothers of Color in Academia (MOCA), and they have organized on their campus to advocate for “access and resources for student-parents” (291). Several of their demands have been met, such as mapping out of lactation sites on campus; they also succeeded in creating a Día de las Madres action day in support of their demands, when student-parents could be heard by university members.

The anthology’s final entry discusses stillbirth and remembering in the form of a testimonio, “My Forever Sleeping Baby” (309). The author shares her story of her son Sebastian, who was stillborn, as a way of disrupting the silences surrounding the experiences of stillbirth. The story of her pregnancy and Sebastian’s birth is filled with deep emotion and a level of vulnerability not often found in academic writings. Thus the anthology ends with a testimonio written as an offering, providing an “opportunity to increase awareness of pregnancy loss and the importance of reproductive justice, especially for Women of Color” (318).

In their introduction to the volume, the editors began by explaining how, when, and where the seed for this anthology was planted. They describe the project as held together by collective dreaming, imagination, tears, laughter, meals, pláticas, and the revolutionary power of motherhood. While viewing the collection of Chicana m(other)work stories as an academic-activist success, the editors acknowledged that the anthology may be read as “cisgendered, heteronormative, and focused on the able-bodied” (14). This provides an entry point for focusing future studies and theorizing on queer and trans m(other)work, as well as additional pathways to other-mothering in disability communities, particularly in communities of color. As Ana Castillo writes in her foreword, “Mother may be broadly defined,” and creating mother awareness, a Buddhist construct based on past lifetimes, is a “call not solely to biological mothers but to everyone” as a means of developing relationships of unconditional love with all (xii).

Women of color who have experienced or are experiencing the institutional challenges of being mother-scholars will especially appreciate this anthology. For a broad readership, as well, the essays and stories provide

insight and a sense of shared understanding of the lived realities of m(other)ing in higher education. Undergraduate and graduate-level courses in ethnic studies, gender studies, education, and sociology, among other fields, will find *The Chicana M(other)work Anthology* to be an innovative addition to assigned readings.

Maricela DeMirjyn, Colorado State University