

Apr 1st, 12:30 AM

## Introduction to the 2008 Conference Proceedings – “Poesía, Baile y Canción: The Politics, Implications, and Future of Chicana/os’ Cultural Production”

Mari Castañeda , Editor  
*University of Massachusetts - Amherst, mari@comm.umass.edu*

Michael Calderón-Zaks , Co-Editor  
*University of California - Merced, mcaldez@mac.com*

Gilberto Garcia , Co-Editor  
*Central Washington University, ggarcia@cwu.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/naccs>



Part of the [Chicana/o Studies Commons](#), [Ethnic Studies Commons](#), and the [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#)

---

Castañeda, Mari , Editor; Calderón-Zaks, Michael , Co-Editor; and Garcia, Gilberto , Co-Editor, "Introduction to the 2008 Conference Proceedings – “Poesía, Baile y Canción: The Politics, Implications, and Future of Chicana/os’ Cultural Production”” (2008). *NACCS Annual Conference Proceedings*. 1.  
<https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/naccs/2008/Proceedings/1>

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies Archive at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in NACCS Annual Conference Proceedings by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@sjsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@sjsu.edu).

**Mari Castañeda**  
**Department of Communication**  
**University of Massachusetts, Amherst**

**Michael Calderón-Zaks**  
**Center for the Study of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity**  
**Ithaca College**

**Gilberto Garcia**  
**Department of Political Science**  
**Center of Latino/Latin American Studies**  
**Central Washington University**

**Editorial Board for the NACCS 2008 Proceedings**

***Introduction to the 2008 Conference Proceedings***  
***"Poesía, Baile y Canción: The Politics, Implications, and Future of Chicana/os' Cultural Production"***

**Introduction**

The online publication of the proceedings for the 2008 conference held Austin, Tejas marks the beginning of a new era for the NACCS! Rather than using precious tree resources to print the proceedings, the National Board decided at the mid-year meeting before the Austin conference to publish the proceedings electronically. Not only would this ensure that all future conference proceedings would be available to members from any computer terminal at any time, but new members would be able to review the intellectual and activist trajectory of the association through e-proceedings. In addition, as digital media and information communication technology become critically important for online and offline participation in our communities and academic circles, the National Board believed NACCS needed to be at the forefront of the expanding landscape of electronic engagement. The Editorial Board for the 2008 Proceedings is honored to have been selected to take the lead of the first ever online publication of NACCS proceedings. These peer-reviewed proceedings are very important because they are a selected group of papers that act as a public record and snapshot of the various issues, case studies, and issues that NACCS members were engaging within their conference presentations.

The call for papers reminded emerging and seasoned scholars on the nature of Chicana/o Studies scholarship: this scholarship has challenged, contested and revised both the interpretations of the power of culture as well as its role in the formation of social structures, policies, practices and identity. Just as important, it called for a research, which examined the cultural politics of the Latina/o communities as reflected in "theory and praxis" and its "complex multilayered" engagement. It specifically sought contributions from mujer-produced cultural productions and their role in highlighting diverse issues from gender, sexuality to voicelessness as well as scholarship exploring the transnational turn in the formation of Chicana/o Studies. And finally, the call included not just exploring Chicana/o cultural politics but how they are important in the movement towards social justice. The following section briefly summarizes each of the papers in the respective order developed by 2008 Editorial Board however we are also aware given the interactive nature of digital media members may develop their own logic to the assemblage of papers presented here. This is actually the exciting element of online proceedings and we encourage members to submit their thoughts to the NACCS blog about other potential ways to organize the papers. Many thanks to Kathy Blackmer-Reyes, Julia Curry Rodriguez, and the National Board for their vision, their invaluable help throughout this process, and their forward-looking acknowledgement of association's most important resource – the incredibly committed, scholar-activist members that help NACCS thrive.

## The Papers

The first four papers of the 2008 proceedings are papers by NACCS members featured in conference plenaries. The first paper is by Juan Mora-Torres, "La Primavera del Inmigrante": Media and Voice in the Making of Chicago's Immigrant Rights' Movement, 2005-2006," and his paper was featured in the conference Thematic Plenary. Given the conference theme on the politics and political nature of Chicana/o cultural production, Mora-Torres' paper not only historicizes the Immigrant Rights Movement that had captivated the U.S. for the last several years, but also the role of media in both organizing and documenting the movement. His paper especially discusses the centrality of Mexican Chicago in the initiation of the movement and the development of a national archive that will capture oral histories of Latinos who have participated in the Immigrant Rights Movement.

The following two papers are by the 2008 Frederick A. Cervantes Student Premio Recipients: graduate winner, Alvaro Huerta and undergraduate winner, Joaquín Castañeda, both of whom had their papers featured on the Student Plenary. Huerta's paper, Looking Beyond "Mow, Blow and Go": A Case Study of Mexican Immigrant Gardeners in Los Angeles," examines the social organization of Mexican gardeners and their participation in the growing informal economy of Los Angeles. His contribution in this understudied area of research is critical for challenging the notion that informal economies lack social networks and social capital, particularly in the unregulated landscape industry. Castañeda's paper, "The Oak Park Redevelopment Plan: Housing Policy Implications for a Community Undergoing Early Stage Gentrification," documents the historical legacy and impact of redevelopment housing policies on a community outside of Sacramento. He argues that such policies not only gentrified the neighborhood, but in the process pushed out the most vulnerable members of the community for a redevelopment plan that was often unrealized and problematic.

The final paper in these 2008 proceedings that was featured in one of plenaries at the conference is by Anne Marie Leimer, "Chicana Photography: The Power of Place," and her paper was presented at the Chicana Plenary. In keeping with the spirit of this dialogic plenary, we present Leimer's paper as being in conversation with another member's paper selected for the proceedings. In the papers written by Leimer and Amanda Maria Morrison, the scholars explore Chicana/os cultural productions in music and photography. In both papers the authors contest and challenge both the interpretation of the power of culture as well as its impact on policies, practices and identity. On the one hand, Leimer's paper is an examination of the photographic work of three Chicanas: Laura Aguilar, Kathy Vargas, and Delilah Montoya. Through the application of the ideas of space and place originating from the work of Lippard and de Certeau, Leimer's searches the meanings of the "sites and bodies" in the work of the Chicana photographers. For Leimer, the photography of Aguilar, Vargas, and Montoya, present through the images of bodies and sites simple everyday acts, and transformed the geographic location of space into an intimate place: "something intimately known, something that holds human history, something of great power." Thus, Leimer concludes the work of the photographers leave traces of the lives lived in those geographic sites transforming the landscape and "reveal the power of place."

On the other, Amanda Maria Morrison's "Too Mex for the Masses: Bringing Mexican Regional Music to Market" is a critique of the Latino music industry's ghettoization of this genre and the promotion of a more hip Latino image capable of crossing into the mainstream of American music taste. According to Morrison, this musical genre represents an identity of Latinidad, which threatens the dominant cultural order, and fails to appeal to the non-Latino consumer's perception of Latino culture. Applying the notion of "tropicalism", a concept that presents a view of Latino culture with an "intrinsic eroticism and "hot bloodedness", influences the marketing and promotional practices, thus, marginalizing Mexican regional music within the domestic entertainment industry. Moreover, the entertainment industry's interest in reaching out to the non-Hispanic market and the more affluent Latinos reveals a class-based and racialized discourse that further marginalized Mexican regional music. In spite of the marketing success and popularity of Mexican regional music, entertainment industry promoters continue to ignore the power of this genre and remains ghettoized in the United States.

Cultural production was a means of challenging hegemonic, from photography and music to playwriting. Virginia Grise and Irma Mayorga challenge hegemony over women's bodies by giving agency to the *panza* in a way that departs from traditional scholarly writing formats. As co-authors of *The Panza Monologues*, a paraphrasing of *The Vagina Monologues*, taps into the lived experiences of Chicanas and other women. Using San Antonio as their setting, the authors link the *panza* to beer and bars, respectively representing a beverage that exemplifies comradery and a space where commoners

can discuss community politics, especially the politics of the everyday in Chicana lives. Moreover, "everyone...has a *panza* story."

From the politics of the *panza* to representations on eating, Elizabeth Kessler examines the written discourses on Latinas and food. The discourse on Latinas and food is highly gendered and sexualized. Kessler documents both the scientific and literary discussions, combining Sigmund Freud and Cristina Garcia. And what does a link between food and sex reveal about power relations within the family or the community? Is food therapeutic for multiple difficulties in the everyday Latina life? Kessler explores these questions.

While other papers did not focus on "cultural productions", never the less, the scholarship highlighted the importance to study the increasingly complex formation of identity in the Chicana/o community. From the early focus on a "mestizaje" that centered on an indigenous-European identity, the new scholarship explores the Afro mestizo tradition ignored in previous Chicana/o scholarship. Rebecca Romo's "Blaxican Identity: An Exploratory Study of Black/Chicanas/os in California" examines the nature of Black and Chicano identity as well as the processes influencing their decision of racial self-identification. First, Romo reviews three bodies of literature: Black, Chicano, and dual-minority multiracial identity. Based on face-to-face and telephone interviews, Romo collected data on the experience of Blaxican identity from a sample of 12 individuals (five females and seven males). The questions ranged from the typical demographic variables to questions about family history, issues of identity, relationships and networks and family socialization. Most of the respondents preferred a dual identity or Blaxican racial/ethnic identity, even if their physical features favored one group over the other. The study concluded the family, school, peers, and residential neighborhoods influenced Blaxican identity development and experience.

Another important research subject, that is just as significant and important in the formation of a critical Chicana/o Studies scholarship is the application of theory in the interpretation of the politics of culture today. One critique of the politics of culture is represented in Sandra K Soto's "Transnational Knowledge and Failing Racial Etiquette". The paper raises the question on the impact the transnational experience in the development of Chicana/o scholarship and its centrality in the theoretical problems of "geopolitical power differentials and the study of power". Soto critiques the simplistic formulations of transnational approaches, which simplifies it as scholarship made by just crossing borders and ignoring other major political forces at work. According to Romo, this may lead to a new form of American exceptionalism, where the scholar ignores the nature of "transnational capitalism". Instead, she proposes the development of a perspective grounded in queer theory that moves the scholar and scholarship away from the "intersectionality" approach in Chicana/o Studies.

Speaking of "transnational capitalism," Alejandro Wolbert Pérez examines the anarchist ideals about love by Ricardo Flores Magón in his prison letters to Maria Talamaca. Dreams and love are guiding counter-hegemonic principles for Magón. Wolbert Pérez borrows from Chela Sandoval's theory that "love can guide and analyze "theoretical and political *movidas*, --revolutionary maneuvers" as a transformational means to decolonizing the self. An examination of these letters reveal the imagined possibilities in that historical moment before the Mexican Revolution. The fact that Flores Magón never married his lover to whom is also the subject, Maria Talavera, due to their anarchist anti-property leanings was an attempt to demonstrate that an alternative to capitalist relations in the everyday life and toward liberation was possible. Not much has been documented of his agency during imprisonment, but his letters reveal that he remained an agent for revolutionary change.

The similar social and political processes between the United States and Mexico did not end at the oncoming of the Mexican Revolution. The similarities continued through World War II and beyond. In documenting an example of poetry as agency, Selfa Chew recovers the history persecuting Mexicans of Japanese ancestry in Mexico during World War II. Memory is recovered through interviews, newspaper articles, and the poetry of Martin Otsuka. While many are familiar with the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, little is known of Japanese Mexicans during that same era. Otsuka's poems illuminate the similar experiences of Japanese Mexicans.

Increasingly, historical literature has been examined as a means of measuring popular and statist sentiments. Daisy Salazar analyzes late nineteenth century *nuevomexicano* pro-statements as a means of countering Anglo attempts to marginalize *hispanos* in "Eusebio Chacón's Statist Narratives of Nuevo Mexico." To counter Anglo degradations of *nuevomexicanos*, Chacón constructs a new narrative that whitens their image vis-à-vis "la gitana," the "outsider." Like much of the older Spanish-Mexican order that was in decline throughout the borderlands region, Chacón defends the older order against the new Anglo one while maintaining the tradition of racializing those on the margins. Such was an exercise in matching the valor of whiteness with the new Anglo power structure and finding common ground with them by racializing "outsiders."

Rounding out the Proceeding is Paula Straile-Costa's "Indigenous Ecology and Chicanada Coalition Building in the dramatic works of Cherrie Moraga: "Living Models" for a Sustainable Future" paper which examines the environmentalist views of one of the most renowned Chicana writers. Straile-Costa analyzes Cherrie Moraga's trilogy, *The Last Generation*, *Heroes and Saints*, and *the Circle in the Dirt* and uncovers an Chicana/o environmental discourse grounded in a materialist interpretation ( "Class before race before sex before sexuality."). According to the author, Moraga's dramatic works present what she calls a "re-valorization of pre Columbian and Native American values, beliefs and ways of life.". While the indigenous ecology and Chicanada coalition building sounds problematic, Straile-Costa argues that Moraga resolves the problem by shifting the meaning of land to a more inclusive definition that extends to a planet without frontiers and its resources: the land encompassing the body and the earth in building such a coalition. Straile-Costa concludes that the plays are documents to Chicano history and successful Chicana/o activism applicable in the struggle against global threats. Thus, this essay reflects clearly some of the central ideas of the conference call for papers, such as the examination of the politics of cultural production and a call for social justice around environmental issues. As Straile-Costa sates, "As such, we must read them as urgent calls to action, on behalf of Mother Earth and all of us who depend on her".

To conclude, the Editorial Board for the 2008 Proceedings hopes NACCS members will appreciate the all work and effort that authors have contributed in order to make this inaugural online proceedings a success. Without the authors, there would be no proceedings, and as a collaborative effort, we have deep gratitude for their willingness to share their scholarship.

Submitted con respeto y solidaridad,  
Mari Castañeda, Michael Calderón-Zaks, y Gilberto Garcia

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mora-Torres, Juan.

***"La Primavera del Inmigrante": Media and Voice in the Making of Chicago's Immigrant Rights' Movement, 2005-2006***

Alvaro Huerta, Alvaro.

***Looking Beyond "Mow, Blow and Go": A Case Study of Mexican Immigrant Gardeners in Los Angeles***

Castañeda, Joaquín.

***The Oak Park Redevelopment Plan: Housing Policy Implications for a Community Undergoing Early Stage Gentrification***

Leimer, Ann Marie.

***Chicana Photography: The Power of Place***

Morrison, Amanda Maria.

***Too Mex for the Masses: Bringing Mexican Regional Music to Market***

Grise, Virginia and Mayorga, Irma.

***Power to the Panza: The Politics of Panza Positive Cultural Production, a Performance***

Kessler, Elizabeth.

***Latinas in the Kitchen: The Rhetoric of Food and Desire***

Romo, Rebecca.

***Blaxican Identity: An Exploratory Study of Blacks/Chicanas/os in California***

Soto, Sandra K.

***Transnational Knowledge Projects and Failing Racial Etiquette***

Wolbert Pérez, Alejandro.

***"María y revolución, eso es lo que ocupa mi corazón": Love and Liberation in the Prison Writings of Ricardo Flores Magón***

Chew, Selfa.

***Re-imagining Collectivities: The Mexican Japanese during World War II***

Salazar, Daisy.

***Eusebio Chacón's Statist Narratives of Nuevo México***

Straile-Costa, Paula.

***Indigenous Ecology and Chicanada Coalition Building in the dramatic works of Cherrie Moraga: "Living Models" for a Sustainable Future***