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2001 NACCS Scholar Award Speech

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CHAPTER
TWO



Cordelia Candalaria
2001 NACCS Scholar Award Speech

Muy agradecida. That was quite an inspiration just to hear. Each of those credits reminds me of all the dishwashing and the sweeping and the mopping that went on behind the scenes to produce that work. So, it's so nice to hear it from the other side. Thank you so much, Julia [Curry Rodríguez].

I also want to thank the current NACCS leadership and those of you who are doing the dishwashing and the planning and all of the infrastructural work that's necessary to keep things going in Chicana/o studies around the country. Part of the beauty of our scholarship is that we think getting our hands dirty is all right, even as we never want to lose sight of our intellectual and scholarly goals. It's crucial not to forget that and we are about producing research based knowledge as we keep our hands and feet in the community. That's been part of our uniqueness and they go together.

To those of you who wrote on my behalf, thank you for such a beautiful surprised. I'm very honored to share this with a pathbreaking group of

other people: Rodolfo Acuña, Luis Leal, Margarita Melville, Americo Paredes. Tey Diana Rebolledo, Ada Riddell Sosa, Julian Samora and all of the rest. And of course, to receive it this year along with my colega and inspiration, Cherríe Moraga, means so much to me and is such a testament to the collective will and energy and creativity that Chicana/o studies cultural workers. Thanks as well to my family—husband, son, parents, siblings: todos—without whom it wouldn't have been possible, or even very fulfilling.

But, also recall it wasn't always this way. Because there were exclusionary agendas we had to confront along the way. Tonight I'd like to express some of my gratitude with dos poemas que salieron de diferentes conferencias de NACCS. The first one was written in many ways my salvation from the stress and depression that resulted from a very heated and lively and animated meeting of the PAC, the Political Action Committee. Anybody here remember those PAC meetings? Anyway, the first poem is called *Raíces Misteriosas* and describes one stage of my working out some of the PAC ideological and identity debates. The second was written a few years afterwards. Taken together, they're sort of a document of my association with the Association, a kind of "portrait of the profesora as a MEChista on the NAC(C)S continuum." They try to capture that stress, conflict, uncertainty, and sacredness of that process. Allow me some poetic license, colegas. Con su permiso.



Raíces Misteriosas

[sing: alla en el rancho grande
 alla nunca vivía
 ni conocía
 ni entendía]

It was just a song of the past
 Of that past before youth
 Herencia de mis abuelos
 Y de los d'ellos.

A time, they say, of romance
 When golondrinas winged through open sky
 And freedom lived unfettered in the soul.

[sing: en la tierra morena,
 cielito lindo, vienen bajando,
 un par d'ojitos negros, cielito lindo,
 et ceterrrrrrraahhh]

Pero otros dicen “¡Mentiras!”
 It was a time of work and dust
 And chains that held the mind and spirit
 Ignorant, esclavos del pinche patrón.

[sing: borachita me voy para la cap-i-tal—]

So here I am
 Pulled by the strains of music
 And my past unsure of any of it
 Yet forced to sing

[sing: Como una paloma por su cu
 cu ru cu cu—]

Aver que dejo a mis hijos:

Canciones
 Lagrimas
 Ambos.



The second poem has an interesting history in that it was first published in Germany by Dieter Herms, some of you remember Dieter and his important effort to raise consciousness in Europe about our work. So I'll give credit to *Die zeitgenössische Literatur de Chicanos*. As bad my German is, you can probably appreciate how interesting it was to help Dieter translate this into German. Written in the form of a conversation with my little sister who represents all of the "little" sisters and brothers, including myself, because we all start out inocentes. And, of course, there's a pun on *manita* because, as some of you know, I am a *manita* de Nuevo Mexico. Thank you.



Explaining Aztlán to a 'Manita

In the beginning, 'manita, God ended the chaos y ¡milagro!
gave us the earth and Aztlán.

"¿'Mana, que es 'que es'?"

What do you mean, "What is 'what is'?"

"What you said, 'God ended the 'que es'—?"

Oh, no! "Que es" no es "chaos"—o, posiblemente, sí es.

But let me explain:

you asked about that word on the wall at your school:

AZTLÁN

you said.

Pues, in the beginning algunos hablaban de "Uno,"

De nomas Un Fundamental. But isn't there more?

Like. . . .

Aztlán is Logos

like in the beginning was the word

the Word made flesh among us —

-flesh, 'manita, como carne—spiritual meat

of our faith en La Virgen, nuestra Guadalupe,

and the blessed fruit de su vientre, Jesús.

Or, is it really only a paradoxical fauna,
or even fungus, of faith grown heavy among us,
a weary global Church of martyred mujeres,
heavy as Vatican gold in the martyred padre's alter
in El Salvador, Guatemala, Ubiquita.

Sí Aztlán es locus
like that place where our ancestors,
los primeros jefecitos y abuelitas came from long ago.
That locus “al norte, cerca al sol.”
No, ‘hita, not “loco” but locus,
un lugar, como barrio o campo,
como pueblo o hogar—allí—anyplace We are.

Pero parece tambien que Aztlán is logic, ‘manita, logic—
that distant source of law now hidden from it.
The logic of how well you can define the geographical axis
relative to the ideological axioms
to arrive at an historical determinism
that intersects time/space with race/class/ and gender:

Si, gender, para un feminismo bien hecho.
A feminism that revives the power of nosotros, ‘manita,
our thought, feeling, and action
that revives the truth of peace and justice para todos,
peace and justice for all—for a change.

The ALL that finally includes la mama, la abuela, la criada,
la obrera, la santa y tambien la puta who got her reputación
from centuries of men who never lost theirs.
Only such a revival can guarantee a survival worth sharing.
Femenismo, sister, the only liberation movement
that sees the folly and fallacy of absolute phallicism!
Hey! that's cla-a-a-a-s-s-sy!, ‘manita!
Well, maybe, too classy.

Because what we really need is classlessness.
You know, ‘manita, the classless-US that defines
those “¿y que?” words

E-quity / E quality and even E-equilibrium—
that classless state of consciousness
that is both nation and notion
both inner and outer
both you/me and s/he/we—
that state of mind that becomes a state of being
a state of freeing us from class.

Yes, that’s it! Aztlán is a model not a metaphysics.
It’s a model for the masses—

no, ‘manita, not like “misa,”
for that mass is sometimes a chimera
and even a crime.

I mean Aztlán is a model for mass movements—

no, not “mass media”—
that’s mostly a cult of public sedation
that obstructs real human relations—
mass marketing’s a prison not our paradigm.

Aztlán is the paradigm.

The paradigm that looks at power
through the oldest ojos of all, sister,
the radical revolutionary’s eyes.

Why oldest?

Because todo—todo—¡TODO es revolucionario!
es revolucionario!

like the revolving globe
like day and night revolutionizes time and space everyday

like “night and day you are the one”
is love and revolutionary power
like life fertilized by death.

Why oldest?
Because all—All—ALL is rad i cal!
De las raíces de abajo
from the seed underneath, kid,
the seed beneath the pyramid of elite power
to be overturned so the seed of our power,
NOSOTROS, can lead a new way.

See, ‘manita, how your pretty graffiti at school
led us to discover what we need to recover?
Aztlán es un buen mestizaje
of identity
of idea
of ideology

And if we work it together con el Borinquen de los barrios
with urban factories and border maquilas
with tribal rez’s and campos de pieza de todo
y con TODO las razas del rainbow
en un mezclamiento natural—
then from Nicaragua to Namibia
from El Paso to el norte
de Los Angeles a los rincones mas allá
y tambien dentro la casa y por
la causa feminista—
-hacemos un nuevo renacimiento.

And all around our U~N~I~T~Y will turn things
NWOD EDISPU
‘Manita: that’s the RIGHT SIDE UP!
with the same cosmic >>>>> FORCE>>>>>
that warms the earth
[at NACCS in Tucson, Arizona on April 6, 2001]

Then we’ll know—Then we’ll be—
A Z T L A N

