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Welcome Letter, NACCS Chair

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Welcome

NACCS Chair, Karleen Pendleton Jiménez

Dear Colegas,

I write to welcome you to the 47th conference of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies. I write to you from Toronto, a city of immigrants from all over the world, inhabiting the traditional land of the First Nations.

This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes” (The Council of Ontario Universities).

Like many of you, we have been in a more or less continuous lockdown for over a year. Toronto has been renamed Covidville by Canadians living outside our boundaries.

Love in the time of La Corona. Love of the land that I walk each evening with more energy and knowledge than I've ever possessed. At this moment spring is taking hold of the streets of Little Italy (my community), where tiny, highly, cultivated gardens push up against the sidewalks with bright colors that we haven't seen in the past 6 months of winter. Love of the velvet purple pansies I planted to mark the occasion. Love of my cats. Love of my children. Love of my girlfriend. Love of my far away family on the other side of a closed border. Love of my friends and colleagues on zoom. Love of my people. I watch the numbers of LA County every night with fear and sadness; there are more cases and deaths in my birth county than in all of Canada, and Chicana/o/xs are taking the greatest hit. What can we in Chicana/o/x Studies offer to recognize, to mourn, to resist, to fight for these lives, to fight for our lives?

Most days I work on loving my students. I am a professor of education. My position is informed by my foundation in Chicana/o/x Studies. I spend a great deal of time considering pedagogical theory and practice. Throughout my career, I have thought most about those who have felt excluded by traditional schooling, often due to systemic discrimination such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, and many more for whom the culture of institutional hierarchy and competition is neither natural nor acceptable. La Corona has exacerbated these exclusions.

Care is the core principle of Teaching. Love is what drives care. Love during the Time of La Corona in the Virtual Classroom. Does my love reach the many students on the other side of the dark, muted screen? Does it come through the flowers and photos that rest behind me on my desk as I speak to them? What troubles me is that even when their cameras are on, I cannot see the shine in their eyes. And without that, I find it nearly impossible to read their emotions. When one of the Indigenous students in my class this year brought up a troubling issue about racist representation, I could not tell if she was ok after speaking up in the zoom classroom of predominantly white students. What is most difficult is that my students are teachers who are not yet vaccinated (for the most part), nor yet prioritized for vaccinations (for the most part), but stand in front of overcrowded classrooms gambling with their health for work. I want to know why there has not been enough love from the public for teachers' bodies throughout the year to make any realistic attempts to protect them. This lack of love has been heartbreaking.

In these moments, I turn to some of my Chicana feminist pedagogy scholars to help me breathe: to Anita Tijerina-Revilla and her "Muxerista Consciousness," to help me recognize that teachers' bodies are primarily women's bodies and that I need to reinvigorate my fight against the government which has deemed them expendable during La Corona; to Dolores Delgado Bernal to remind me of my teachings from home, of my mother's unwillingness to blindly believe the facts that the powers that be would tell her; to Alexandra Arraíz- Matute and her pedagogies of *cariño* when I run between my zoom screen and my daughter's virtual school to keep her from becoming too alone and despairing; to C. Alejandra Elenes and her borderland pedagogies where embracing contradictions and flexibilities has been more important than ever to survive the chaos of the year; to Cindy Cruz who just this week spoke of the importance of transgression if we are to create loving spaces for our queer Chicana/o/x students.

There are possibilities for transgressions in online teaching too, glimpses of

love in the clever and humorous notes filling the chat (finally note-passers have become legitimate). There is love in the feedback I write on their papers before scanning them back into the virtual abyss. There is love in the red heart reactions that spread across the screen when a student has courageously shared a piece of their lives for the others.

I wish to thank the many individuals and committees who have worked on NACCS over the past two years: especially Focos, Caucuses, Awards Committees, The Proceedings Committee, Members who have helped in the writing of NACCS Statements, Noticias Editors, Noticias Contributors, Donors, Volunteers, Board Members, and our Associate and Executive Directors.

Finally, I want to thank members for your trust in me to hold this position. My work on this conference will be my last act as Chair of NACCS; after this I will serve a year as Past-Chair, before stepping down from the board. While this La Corona year has been challenging, it has also been a great privilege to serve in this role. I have had the opportunity to carefully study the panels, abstracts, books, and articles from members of NACCS, and I have come to understand more thoroughly the depth and impact of our research and teaching. It has been one of the most meaningful educational experiences of my life. In a way, I think these extraordinary circumstances have brought the NACCS community closer together. I have had the opportunity to meet so many more members of NACCS through email, zoom and phone calls; I have had the opportunity to listen, to talk, and to learn from other members. As we speak from each of our isolated homes in the time of La Corona, I hear love in the sound of your voices.



Karleen Pendleton Jiménez