

RACIAL EPITHET VIGNETTES

by

Luz Maria Camarena Test

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts, Visual Arts

Boise State University

May 2014

© 2014

Luz Maria Camarena Test

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE

**DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS**

of the thesis submitted by

Luz Maria Camarena Test

Thesis Title: Racial Epithet Vignettes

Date of Final Oral Examination: 13 March 2014

The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Luz Maria Camarena Test, and they evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

Dan Scott, M.F.A.

Co-Chair, Supervisory Committee

Richard A. Young, M.F.A.

Co-Chair, Supervisory Committee

Kate Walker, M.F.A.

Member, Supervisory Committee

Kathy Tidwell, M.S.W.

Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Dan Scott, M.F.A., Co-Chair of the Supervisory Committee, and Richard A. Young, M.F.A., Co-Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The thesis was approved for the Graduate College by John R. Pelton, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College.

## DEDICATION

Para Carmen Sofía, por la abolición del racismo en todas sus formas.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to my loyal and patient committee: Dan Scott, Kate Walker, Richard Young, and special thanks to Kathy Tidwell, from the Social Work department who graciously and enthusiastically agreed to be part of my committee.

## ABSTRACT

In this paper and the accompanying exhibition, I examine the overlap of racism and immigration. This work explores the silent violence of oppression that results from dominant culture attitudes and policies about immigration. It also considers how these attitudes affect the formation of identity, including my own.

For the development of this work, I had to move away from the idea of creating just a project inside my studio to an active participation with the community in search of answers to my internal questions. The work presented is the result of a long process of research within the Mexican community in Idaho. The paintings are the result of the internal assimilation of all the experiences that brought me to understand the issues of being an immigrant. I have also created one short video suggesting the form of a prayer and an act of protest to stop racial discrimination and encourage a change in the immigration system. Some of the images collected during the filming process of the protests and interviews are also referenced in my paintings. The emotions, emphasized in the shadows of the protestors demonstrate certain feelings of not being heard, seen, or acknowledged for the good work that immigrants bring to this country.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE IMMIGRANT AND THE ULYSSES SYNDROME.....	4
Finding Commonalities.....	6
CHAPTER TWO: SLOW VIOLENCE.....	8
Racism and Micro-Aggressions.....	10
Slow Violence and Silent Violence.....	14
CHAPTER THREE: SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART.....	17
The Genesis of The Work.....	20
The Metaphor of Silhouettes.....	21
The Paintings.....	22
The Video.....	26
CONCLUSION.....	32
REFERENCES.....	33
APPENDIX.....	36
The Workshop: “Amate a ti misma: El mejor regalo para tus hijos” (Love Yourself: The Best Gift for Your Kids).....	36

FIGURES..... 40



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	“A Couple in the Cage” .....	40
Figure 2.	Silhouette from the Workshop .....	41
Figure 3.	Photograph form One of The Protestors .....	41
Figure 4.	“Marginalia (Bandage Head)” .....	42
Figure 5.	“Antiquarum Lacrimae” .....	43
Figure 6.	“Carajo/Shit (fragment)” .....	44
Figure 7.	“Mexican Bearers” .....	45
Figure 8.	“Learn How to be a Nobody (Fragment)” .....	46

## INTRODUCTION

*“It is clear that if a man has to become a nobody in order to survive, if he has to remain permanently invisible, he will have no identity, will never become socially integrated nor will he enjoy mental health.”*

Joseba Achotegui

My personal experiences reflect the grief of leaving my family and homeland, Mexico. The death of my mother and leaving my close friends left me isolated, and life in a new country stirred many internalized issues. These experiences forced me to refocus and try to understand how being separated from one’s birthplace—specifically, Mexico—and being a new immigrant can cause internalized grief and depression. Also, because of a new status quo and the difficulty in finding closure with the separation from and death of loved ones and how my own sense of identity was challenged.

Five years ago after moving to Boise, Idaho, I felt the warmth of a beautiful state and people. After a time, certain experiences made me become aware of the differences and how my dark skin along with my accent made many people treat me differently, often leaving me to experience a loneliness and a sense of invisibility. I became aware of my own racial identity. A part of myself I never had to think about or explain before was now being challenged and put into question; not only my origin, but also what this origin meant to my new community. These experiences have taught me to be aware of my surroundings, and forced me to take action. As an artist, a mother, and a friend I cannot remove myself from

participating in my personal growth as a social activist; I am not just existing here, I am living here, as part of the quilt that brings many designs to the wide and beautiful landscape that makes up Idaho. I'm moving from simply being here into action with my art. Can we heal if we speak up about our own experiences by sharing our personal stories, no matter how painful and uncomfortable it might be to the community? What opens up or includes us when we share our stories? How can we proudly claim our own identities without feeling inadequate? Do we have to give up our roots in order to be heard and seen? These are questions that drive my exploration in my thesis project.

I believe that we need to talk about the narratives of people who have lived and passed through violence; where men, women and children have drowned in their tears by seeking a better life; leaving behind the past for an unknown future and receiving the unwanted label, "dirty Mexican." In the article "Children of Immigrants in the Welfare System. Findings from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being" Dettlaff and Earner state that "beginning with the immigration experience, families face considerable risks entering the United States"<sup>1</sup>; these risks include violence, robbery, rape, abuse, and inhuman living conditions that can sometimes persist for many years. In one of my one-on-one interviews, discuss in Chapter 3, an immigrant woman from Mexico explained to me how during the crossing of the border she was raped and literally held captive under the hands of the "coyote" (the person who illegally smuggles people across the border) for several months, until she managed to escape. Another woman related to me how she lost all her belongings and was left alone for days in a dark, cold, wet, and rat-filled tunnel with no

---

<sup>1</sup> (Dettlaff and Earner, 2008, p.2)

food and stranded in her journey across the border. People are still afraid to share their stories out loud and publicly. What is being done for the immigrants arriving with great expectations, like those before them at Ellis Island? How can art express an aesthetic function, as well as being a political statement where the victims can be included, where everyone can have a voice? There is a silent violence growing underneath all these issues that is creating sick people, sick communities, and a sick world. Mean and degrading words said directly and indirectly have a huge impact on the lives of many people and it is imperative that we understand that any type of discrimination is a form of abuse. It is an aggressive and violent act that needs to come to an end.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE IMMIGRANT AND THE ULYSSES SYNDROME

*“You ask me my name. I shall tell you. My name is nobody and nobody is what everyone calls me.” (Odyssey, Song IX, 360)*

I believe that an essential component of immigration is that it takes a person out of his/her context and immediately starts a process of dissolving the meaning of personal identity. Discrimination only reinforces that dissolution of identity and adds even more stress in the assumption of stereotypes that diminishes and blurs the real person. In her article “Immigrants And Health Care: Sources Of Vulnerability,” Kathryn Pitkin Derosé affirms that “immigrants are often identified as a ‘vulnerable population’-that is, a group at increased risk for poor physical, psychological and social health outcomes [and that] vulnerability is shaped by many factors, including political and social marginalization and a lack of socioeconomic and social resources.”<sup>2</sup> The risk to mind and body and the conflicts in engaging the new culture are central factors in the dissolution of identity for immigrants.

Joseba Achotegui, a noted psychiatrist who works with immigrants and refugees in Barcelona, Spain gave the name “Ulysses Syndrome” to a series of symptoms experienced by immigrants caused by important stressors such as:

---

<sup>2</sup> (Pitkin Derosé, 2007, p.1258)

- a) Social isolation and loneliness resulting from leaving behind love ones, the own country with its traditions, culture, and language;
- b) A sense of despair and failure because the immigrant “despite having invested enormously in the emigration (economically, emotionally, etc.), does not even manage to muster together the very minimum conditions to make a go of it;”<sup>3</sup>
- c) Trauma of the afflictions and physical damages of the journey and the fear of detention and deportation when not documented.

Because of these situations, which Achotegui identifies as stressors, immigrants often internalized those experiences, which leads to multiple harms. This often manifests in symptoms that include: depression; anxiety related disorders such as tension, insomnia, irritability, and intrusive thoughts; and somatic symptoms, such as fatigue and certain symptoms of confusion. It is important to notice that even though some of these symptoms relate to other disorders, most of them are exclusively created by the “Ulysses Syndrome.” For example, immigrants may feel depressed, showing sadness, and crying, but this type of depression does not show apathy or thoughts of death as in standard depressive disorders. Immigrants are willing to fight for a better life, they typically have clear objectives and they have strong motivation to keep moving forward.

Achotegui emphasizes the fact that there is nothing wrong with the immigrants, no more than any other regular citizens. These symptoms are created by a socio-political structure. According to Achotegui, Foucault claims that “psychiatric diagnosis is not something objective or neutral but something which is found linked to power structures, and

---

<sup>3</sup> (Achotegui, 2004, p.1)

which forms part of bio-politics,”<sup>4</sup> and that it is unfair to catalog immigrants as failures or deficient, when the reality is that “they are experiencing inhuman stress factors to which there is no possible capacity of adaptation.”<sup>5</sup> Interestingly enough, these are symptoms that manifest themselves only after migration takes place and are not common among the population in their homeland. As Pitkin Derosé states, most immigrants are normally in very good health at their arrival to the U.S., “however [their] health appears to deteriorate over time ...with increasing acculturation.”<sup>6</sup> The symptoms worsen the longer immigrants stay in the new country—a result of the acculturation process.

### **Finding Commonalities**

In search of my cultural roots and a “family” that I could identify with, I connected with my Latina “compañeras” (women friends), asking many questions that needed to be asked and answered. Why do we all feel so alone in such a big country? Is it only us Mexicans, that feel the pain of not belonging, not fitting in, not being part of this “American quilt”? With these burning questions, I began my work to answer my own need to seek out the truth; to document a series of interviews that would begin a process of understanding and unveiling our commonalities as a community.

It was not a simple nostalgia coming out of nowhere; it was a longing fed by a constant sensation of wanting and feeling a need to be complete in this country. Even though our lives and our economic status have improved here in USA, many of us still have an

---

<sup>4</sup> (Achotegui, 2004, p.2)

<sup>5</sup> (Achotegui, 2004, p.2)

<sup>6</sup> (Pitkin Derosé, 2007, p.1263)

emptiness deeply rooted in our souls because of our dislocation from our country of birth. I believe that in order to be able to talk in depth about all these issues, I needed to create a very special bond between these women and myself, before the stories could be told from a personal level of trust.



## CHAPTER TWO: SLOW VIOLENCE

*“No subject will readily volunteer to become the object, the inessential; it is not the Other who, in defining himself as the Other, establishes the One. The Other is posed as such by the One in defining himself as the One. But if the Other is not to regain the status of being the One, he must be submissive enough to accept this alien point of view.”*

*Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex*

We only see violence when it's right in front of us, when it affects us directly and it is so abrupt and explosive that we can no longer deny its visibility. In his book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon explains the problems generated by a chain of unfolding environmental crises that obstructs both human and ecological evolution. He gives the name of “slow violence” to this type of violence that is incremental and exponential, whose disastrous tremors are postponed for years, decades or centuries. “Our temporal bias toward spectacular violence exacerbates the vulnerability of ecosystems treated as disposable by capitalism, while simultaneously intensifying the vulnerability of those whom the human-rights activist Kevin Bales has called ‘disposable people’.”<sup>7</sup> There is a tendency to ignore the needs of the oppressed and to treat them as disposable people.

In her book *The Second Sex*, Simone De Beauvoir makes a parallel between the relation master-slave, stating that the master “does not make a point of his need that he has

---

<sup>7</sup> (Nixon, 2011, p.4)

for the other; he has in his grasp the power of satisfying this need through his own action;[...] even if the need is at bottom equally urgent for both, it always works in favor of the oppressor and against the oppressed.”<sup>8</sup>

There is a need to focus our attention towards “injustices of class, gender, race, sexuality or immigrant status.”<sup>9</sup> Slow violence, racism, discrimination, and immigration status can all be invisible. Slow violence is only visible to the ones living its consequences, for those who are not its victims it seems non-existent. “For if slow violence is typically underrepresented in the media, such underrepresentation is exacerbated whenever (as typically happens) it is the poor who become its frontline victims.”<sup>10</sup> I want to reiterate that it is yes, the poor, but also the oppressed; the Other, the one that is always seen as inferior, less human, less important, less smart, less...

Edward W Said, in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, explains how under these lenses of imperialist vocabulary, we are transformed and affected by words and concepts such as “inferior” or “subject races,” “subordinate people,” “dependency,” “expansion,” and “authority.” It is not a surprise that some of these concepts affect our own vision of the “other” and how we relate to other cultures.

Even worse, the chain reaction keeps evolving and the insemination of the colonizer’s language seems to have taken place in every man’s heart. It may seem dramatic but the truth is that words carry not only the past but shape the present and define the future. As Said states, it is a fact that the “extraordinary global reach of classical nineteenth-and early

---

<sup>8</sup> (De Beauvoir, 1968, p.208)

<sup>9</sup> (Nixon, 2011, p.4)

<sup>10</sup> (ibid, p.2)

twentieth century European imperialism still casts a considerable shadow over our own times.”<sup>11</sup> It is not only about words and how they are used, but their effects in the psychology of the dominant culture. The way in which the people in power conceive of themselves has implications for those that are below them in their constructed hierarchy. The functional paradigm of this system necessitates a dominant group. The oppressed, the poor, the other, the immigrants are the ones forced to accept and take on the burden of the aggression and slow violence that is the point of view of the One.

### **Racism and Micro-Aggressions**

*“President Clinton, Race advisory Board conclude that a) racism is one of the most divisive forces in our society, b) racial legacies of the past continue to haunt current policies and practices that create unfair disparities between minority and majority groups, c) racial inequities are so deeply ingrained in Mexican society that they are nearly invisible, and d) most White Americans are unaware of the advantages they enjoy in this society and of how their attitudes and actions unintentionally discriminate against persons of color.”<sup>12</sup>*

Dr. Derald Wing Sue uses the findings of the Clinton Race and Advisory Board to identify problems of racism in our time. As a Mexican, it is not easy to digest the idea that *the racial inequities are so deeply ingrained in Mexican society that they are nearly invisible*. Even if we believe that in the post-civil rights era racism in North America has changed, “racism is more likely than ever to be disguised and covert and has evolved from the ‘old fashion’ form, in which overt racial hatred and bigotry is consciously and publicly displayed, to a more ambiguous and nebulous form that is more difficult to identify and

---

<sup>11</sup> (Said,1993, p.5)

<sup>12</sup> (Wing Sue, 2007, p.271)

acknowledge.”<sup>13</sup> Being an overt racist is seen as “politically incorrect” and most people would not want to be characterized as a racist. In the contemporary climate, racism has become less visible, more subtle and indirect. It operates below the level of conscious awareness, and continues to oppress in unseen ways, and could be more accurately be identified through the concept of “micro-aggressions.”

“First coined by Pierce in 1970, the term micro-aggressions refers to “subtle, stunning, often automatic and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘put-downs’ [...]. Racial micro-aggressions have also been described as subtle insults (verbal, non-verbal and/or visual) directed toward people of color often automatically and unconsciously.”<sup>14</sup> Sadly enough, the perpetrators are often unaware and unconscious about the effects of their manner of communication. Their actions may appear harmless or innocent in nature; they are, nevertheless, detrimental to recipients because they result in harmful psychological consequences. This phenomenon is the perfect example of the silent violence that I am exploring in my work. These constant and often unnoticeable aggressions hold power “because they are invisible, and therefore they don’t allow Whites to see their actions and attitudes may be discriminatory.”<sup>15</sup> The person of color, receptor of the micro-aggression, may feel bad, insulted, minimized, but is left to question what actually happened because the perpetrator will not acknowledge that he is being offensive. “The result is confusion, anger and overall draining of energy.”<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> (Wing Sue, 2007, p.271)

<sup>14</sup> (Wing Sue, 2007, p.272)

<sup>15</sup> (DeAngelis, 2009, p.3)

<sup>16</sup> (DeAngelis, 2009, p.2)

This is a clear example of passive or covert aggressive behavior, where the aggressor seems so well intentioned and the victim is seen as overly sensitive, and yet a sub-textual message is delivered in such an indirect and concealed manner that it is hard to identify. The truth of the real intentions is kept underneath the surface, hidden and unattended, “with the projective device of accusing ethnic minorities of being hypersensitive.”<sup>17</sup> Racism is an abusive behavior that creates a traumatic form of interpersonal violence that can lacerate the spirit, scar the soul, and puncture the psyche. “The trauma of racism is exacerbated for those individuals whose status is not privileged in society.”<sup>18</sup> Racism is a cancer, a cumulative trauma that affects racial and ethnic minorities.

We do have choices that are not that hard to adopt once we understand the dynamics of these interactions. In her article “The Joy of Marginality,” Adrian Pipher suggests: “reactions to racism and racial stereotypes are ultimately political choices over which we have control.”<sup>19</sup> Racism is not only a problem for the victims, the minorities, and the oppressed. Racism is a human problem. As Sanchez-Hucles reminds us, we must take responsibility for our actions and their consequences for ourselves and for others:

One cannot destroy or deny the humanity of another without ultimately destroying one’s own humanity. The health and integrity of our society is as dependent on the well being of our most disempowered members as it is on those who are most powerful. We must together accurately label our problems and collectively solve them.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> (Sanchez-Hucles, 1998, p.70)

<sup>18</sup> (Sanchez-Hucles, 1998, p.71)

<sup>19</sup> (Pipher, 1996, p. 234)

<sup>20</sup> (Sanchez-Hucles, 1998, p.83)

The terrible repercussions of racism and the egotistic idea of considering oneself superior to any other human being is absurd and grotesque. The mindset that exists in the racist paradigm has harms for the oppressor and the victim. Nevertheless, for ethnic minorities who live under the oppression of these attitudes and are unable to receive information and guidance about their rights and to have their point of view validated, this becomes the *Catch 22* of their lives. Until they are empowered to resist these forms of oppression, there is really no escape from this power dynamic. There is no excuse for oppression. There are many well-intended Whites that are unaware of the unconscious racial biases that they have inherited. In the end, discrimination against other people is a choice. Racism should be *everybody's* concern.

If we choose to look from a point of view other than the dominant view, there is no room for questioning what I and the other Mexicans are experiencing; the silent and aggressive stares: “why are you here, and who said you could be here?” The aftermath of these attitudes is destructive to all communities, not just to the marginalized community.

The consequences of these attitudes are unjust, unfair, and hostile towards human and civil rights. However, discrimination towards the “Other,” in this case “us” the Mexicans, the immigrants, the undocumented, and the dark skin Latinos, has become invisible, and is usually unheard and unseen. There is a tendency to be unconscious of and to downplay the pain of others when you have never experienced racism, discrimination, and oppression. When white men and women are asked what it is like to be white, there is often a glazed look of confusion. On the other hand, ask any person of color and they can give you story after story of being followed in a store, or even stopped and questioned for walking in a “good” neighborhood. This is called racial profiling, and today, there is case after case of men dying

of what has been termed “Driving while Black” or walking in a neighborhood and eating skittles. The death of Trayvon Martin on February 26, 2012 is a tragic example of the way in which laws, such as Florida’s notorious Stand Your Ground law, codify bias and fear into the legal and social system. This seems to me a clear example of the slow violence of racism.

### **Slow Violence and Silent Violence**

For the purposes of my work, it seems more accurate for me to rename Rob Nixon’s concept of *Slow Violence* to *Silent Violence* as this language matches more closely my experiences and understanding of the realities of racial oppression. The emotional violence that my community suffers continues to manifest itself in troubling high school dropout rates, sexual and physical abuse, and problems of addiction. This recalls the understanding of Achotegui’s articulation of the “Ulysses Syndrome.” Many educators would identify it as the “Internalized Racial Oppression (IRO). When a victim experiences a hurt that is not healed, distress patterns emerge whereby the victim engages in some type of harmful behavior. Internalized oppression has been described as the process by which these patterns reveal themselves.”<sup>21</sup> The violence in this case is silent because there is no awareness of it, or better said there is a denial of it. I call it silent violence because many may not be able to give it a specific name.

When I first started to focus my attention on immigrant women living in Idaho, I found myself having many things in common with them --distance from home, language, culture, and strong rooted traditions. But more than that, we had an underlying feeling of being incomplete and fragmented; we shared a need to return to the origin of our roots and

---

<sup>21</sup> (Padillo, 2001, p.65)

the place we called home. As naïve as it may sound, it never really occurred to me that we were also suffering racial discrimination. As previously mentioned, I never really thought about my racial identity until I came to Idaho, at least not to the extent of having to focus my energy on the fact that I really am different. To put it in simple words, I never felt as Mexican as I feel now. Dr. Errol D. Jones, professor emeritus in the History Department at Boise State University, in Dr. Jill Gill's article "Latinos Continue to Fight Racism in Idaho" confirms that Mexican Americans in Idaho are still experiencing racism, discrimination, and serious civil rights abuses. For example, migrant farm workers are not provided with decent housing or even portable toilets in the fields; or Mexican Americans are routinely denied management positions in food processing plants despite their proven competence and seniority.<sup>22</sup> In his article "Immigrants Work in Riskier and More Dangerous Jobs in the United States," Eric Zuehlke discusses in greater depth the specific hardships that Latino workers face:

Immigrants, especially Hispanics are disproportionately exposed to dangerous jobs. The occupational fatality rate for Hispanics has been the highest among all groups in the United States for the last 15 years... Work related deaths affect Hispanic families especially hard... Jobs with higher concentration of Hispanic workers such as service jobs, construction, and maintenance typically do not offer life insurance, leaving Hispanic families especially vulnerable.<sup>23</sup>

These hardships and workplace risks exist because individuals among the dominant culture identify a group of human beings based on their race and responds to them based on culturally codified biases. This response often takes the forms of oppression.

---

<sup>22</sup> (Gill, 2014, p.7)

<sup>23</sup> (Zuehlke, 2009, p.1-3)



In “The Joy of Marginality”, Adrian Pipper talks about her own racial identity: “I become aware of my racial identity when someone brings it to my attention. This happens, for example, when somebody makes a racist, sexist, homophobic or ethnic slur of any kind, the brand of irrational hostility, no matter where it is explicitly directed, reminds me of my vulnerability as a black person.”<sup>24</sup> Her words really speak to my feelings and experiences, which I alluded to earlier, in the aftermath of my immigration to Boise.

Before I was able to identify the sources of this discrimination, I used to come back home feeling paranoid and drained. I always had a little story to share from the day that implied a certain kind of discrimination. It really wasn’t until I started to open up more and more with Latina women that I realized that we all felt the same way. The validation of other women’s stories made it clear to me that I was not paranoid. Seeing in all those women their strength, their integrity, and the incredible accomplishments that they achieved, as they had to overcome very stressful and sometimes inhuman situations, made me realized that I didn’t need to minimize my experiences of myself.

---

<sup>24</sup> (Pipper, 1996, p.233)

## CHAPTER THREE: SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART

*“Most of the work I am doing currently comes, I think from the realization that we are living in a state of emergency...I feel that more than ever we must step outside the strictly art arena, It is not enough to make art.”*

*Guillermo Gomez-Peña.*

Gómez-Peña’s work as a performance artist, writer, activist, and educator has pioneered expression in multiple media, including experimental radio, video, performance, photography, and installation art, in which he addresses issues of race. (See Figure 1.) His work, like many other Latin American artists, is in “continual search for one’s own individual identity as much as those for a collective identity generated every hundred years trying to untangle the mixed feelings that have lingered since Columbus’s voyage.”<sup>25</sup>

My own voyage to Boise and being part of a minority ethnic group not only shook my identity but also my way of working. As I mentioned before, I was pushed out of my comfort zone and out of my art studio to find the answers within the community.

One-on-one interviews with the women were critical, but there had to be more to the story. The work needed to be emotionally driven and the women would have to feel that they were in control of the outcome. I created tools to enhance their stories and their relationships

---

<sup>25</sup> (Camnitzer, 1992, p. 6)

with the other women to allow them to address some of the issues related to being an immigrant. This took the form of a workshop offered through Family Advocates to Latina Women. My focus was mostly directed toward women, because of my relationship to them as a Latina living in the United States. I needed sisters and examples of how to grow and develop my own talents in a foreign country. At the same time, in Mexican culture, women are often the carriers of tradition, and as mothers we have the power and the responsibility to bring awareness to our children about their roots. As Lucy Lippard acknowledges in her article “Looking Around: Where We Are, Where We Could Be,” “we have to know more about our relationship to each other, as part of the cultural ecology, to know where we stand as artists and cultural workers on homelessness, racism, and land, water, cultural and religious rights whether or not we ever work directly on these issues.”<sup>26</sup> The workshop became the mechanism for the women involved to know more about their relationship with each other.

It is my belief that art needs to come from a place of complete empathy and compassion in order to become real. Suzi Gablik talks about the important role that art has in the social realm, in her article “Connective Aesthetics: Arts After individualism,” stating that “care and compassion do not belong to the false objectivism of the disinterested gaze; care and compassion are the tools of the soul, but they are often ridiculed by our society, which has been weak in the empathic mode.”<sup>27</sup>

As an artist and facilitator, my intention was to encourage and motivate the women to tell their stories with respect for the value it would bring, not only to themselves and their

---

<sup>26</sup> (Lippard, 1995 p.118)

<sup>27</sup> (Gablik, 1995 p.84)

families, but also to the community as a whole. By doing so, they brought a wealth of experience and information to Idaho, which only the storyteller can do. All of our stories, no matter how they are expressed or told, function as the messenger for the future of other immigrant women in similar situations. The Latina woman brings to this country their strength, courage, and tenacity. She brings her children with her on this journey with a lack of English language skills and with no family or support system in place. The Latina woman emerges as the backbone of the family with her dreams and hopes to make a difference for future generations. I strived to offer a rare glimpse into the soul of some women in our communities who are not just the housemaid, the restaurant cook, waitress, or occasional nanny, but the woman and mother, who struggles to take her place among other Americans.

The participants' stories become political in the moment that the individualities get dissolved by the commonality of the subject, as Carol Hanisch argues in her article "The Personal is Political": "women are messed over, not messed up! We need to change the objective conditions, not adjust to them."<sup>28</sup>

This project combined both healing and art to create a two-way line of communication between us "the immigrant mothers" and the new society we are living in.

Socially engaged art, attaches to subjects that belong or are related to other disciplines, such as sociology, politics, psychology, etc. and brings a new perspective to the way we relate to art and to these disciplines. Pablo Helguera, author and artist, explains in his book *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, that moving all these disciplines "temporarily into

---

<sup>28</sup> (Hanisch, 1969)

a space of ambiguity” and bringing them “into the realm of art-making [is what] brings new insights to a particular problem or condition and in turn makes it visible to other disciplines.”<sup>29</sup> In a way, art opens the door to a new conversation between disciplines and the general public. For example, in my work, by bringing into my art the results and insights acquired during the workshop created for immigrant woman, I open the door for the public to see some of the problems and issues that immigrants suffer during the acculturation process. My hope is that this new venue of conversation may start a dialog and a better understanding of these issues.

### **The Genesis of The Work**

My research during the workshop, involvement in the Mexican community, and participation in several protests in favor of immigration reform has informed my subsequent studio practice. The experiences that I had and the new understandings that I gained have led to the production of a body of work that advocates for change in a manner that is more conventionally understood as part of the artist’s studio practice. This work is aligned with political and advocacy art. I am presenting a body of work in this thesis project that consists of a series of paintings and one short video that embodies the concerns of the socially engaged project that I executed and connects those ideas to aesthetic considerations of visual art. In preceding projects, I have been a leader, a listener, a teacher, a healer, an advocate, and a social activist in the work. In moving forward, I felt the need to commit to change through education, photography, poetry, and art. It is all part of the change that must take

---

<sup>29</sup> (Helguera, 2011, p.5)

place within us all; as the artist, I feel a responsibility to share the life stories of others in my work.

### The Metaphor of Silhouettes

I have been working with the idea of the silhouette since the creation of the workshop to emphasize the idea of feeling undefined, sometimes scared to be identified, incomplete and almost mute in this process of acculturation. Silhouettes represent the shadows of the physical body, which has no depth and no interior definition, so in a way it reminds us of the shadows of the soul. Silhouettes are also associated with protection of identity. When I started to film, I mostly concentrated on filming the physical shadows. My intention is to make an analogy of the physical shadows, with the silhouettes to keep working with the same ideas of invisibility. There is a constant tendency among immigrants to try to hide their real identity when their status is precarious.

There were many images created in the workshop that helped us as a group to identify and represent feelings of oppression and feeling uprooted through drawings and words. I have found in the world outside of this workshop many of the same words and very similar postures and images, which helped me to develop the paintings for this exhibition. For example, during the first reunion, each participant created (after reflecting and talking about the moment of transition from Mexico to the US) a silhouette that represents a self-perception, rather than a real image. Parts of their personal stories were scratched into the surface of the drawing so that only through the application of charcoal could the words be read. Latino immigrants tend to hide the hardness of their experiences when they crossed the border or even the struggles they live day by day to survive in this new (and sometimes hostile) country. All these stories were recorded, so the words used in images were taken

directly from the videotapes. The black charcoal silhouettes are often incomplete, lacking hands or feet. This is suggestive of how some of these women are unable to show a complete version of themselves; in a similar way, when I filmed and photographed the women in different situations outside of the workshop and asked them about their experiences as an immigrant, they tended to hold the same physical positions and asked me to not show their faces. (See Figures 2 & 3.) Some of these images are integrated in the final paintings. Most of the canvases glued to the disrupted wood panels are the products of the images created as a result of the workshop.

As a visual artist, it is important to bring these issues into my work, because they are my issues as well. I take personally the attacks that my people have to experience everyday, in part because I have experienced them myself. My work talks about these micro-aggressions, this emotional impact that has been lacerating our spirits: feeling uprooted, dislocated, invisible, minimized, being the receptor of constant aggressions, being a nobody, being trapped, unheard, unseen, lied to, treated as a victim for feeling unwanted.

### The Paintings

I am interested in profound subjects that affect our human condition. During the past years, my work has explored social issues that bring pain, despair and feelings of oppression. As Ida Applebroog (See Figure 4) says about her own work: “I live in this world and this is what is going on around me, I can’t change that...[my work] is uncomfortable but the paint is absolutely beautiful.”<sup>30</sup> The sadness and despair that I have been carrying for many years are related not only to my personal experiences, but the experiences of a larger group that

---

<sup>30</sup> (Art in the Twenty-First century, 2005, S.3)

include not only the Latino community but extend to all other communities of color that had been damaged by the repercussions of constant hostility in the form of micro-aggressions directed to their beings.

My work has been influenced by artists that work in an expressionist tradition as well as addressing social or political ideas in their use of materials and surface. I feel an affinity with painters such as Joan Snyder, Joan Mitchell, Harmony Hammond, Ida Applebroog, Leon Golub, and Rufino Tamayo, among many others. They are typically characterized as neo-expressionists to distinguish them from the abstract expressionists that came before them. The Abstract Expressionist movement was concerned with formal issues and aesthetic theory over the subjective landscape of the emotional and the political. What unites the artists that interest me is a tendency to bring a rich subjectivity to their work.

In Joan Snyders' work, the paintings become alive not only through color but also through the addition of different materials, words, layers of paint and physical manipulation of the canvas. Through her approach, she makes subjective reality manifest allowing the viewer a glimpse into a world they wouldn't otherwise know. (See Figure 5.) I approach my paintings in a similar manner to the way that she does. She says about her own working process: "I have to really act the thing out physically right on the canvas. It's happening while it's happening. When I am painting, I am thinking and feeling, and also responding to what's happening on the canvas in a formal way."<sup>31</sup> In my own work, I am literally attacking the surfaces; I tear into the canvas as a way of recording the emotional state and I add materials that are foreign to the paintings such as nails, twine, cement, and my own hair to

---

<sup>31</sup> (as quoted in Herrera, 2005, p.42)



supply the necessary elements to make the work more viscerally whole. I also add words to direct the viewer to an understanding of the micro-aggressions and discrimination that animates these expressive paintings. For example in the painting “Carajo” (See Figure 6), if the viewer looks closely they can see a sign that reads: NO DOGS, NO NEGROS, NO MEXICANS. I integrate this image with paint so they are not obvious at first sight but are discovered in the process of viewing. By doing this, I am creating an analogous experience that replicates the way society covers over uncomfortable things.

Octavio Paz, in his book *Essays on Mexican Art*, in the “Transfigurations” essay, talks about Tamayo’s paintings, describing them as sculptures. He declares that what “distinguishes an illustrator from a painter is space: for the former, it is a frame, an abstract limit, for the latter, a series of internal relationships, a territory governed by its own laws. In Tamayo’s painting, the forms and figures are not in space, they are space.”<sup>32</sup> In my work, I want the forms to inhabit space; they *become* the space by breaking the limits of the format, where the surrounding area of the wall becomes part of the expression of the painting by creating new forms that relate to the wall and the shadows projected by the broken formats.

The paintings that I am presenting have been worked over and over with different layers, fabric, wood, cardboard, cement, hair, nails, twine, photography, and other materials. The paintings are attacked, the canvases are ripped, and the wood is broken, creating openings, wounds, and lacerations. In an image of a mouth, the open space is filled with nails. Images of shadows of different colors appear throughout the paintings. The palette I

---

<sup>32</sup> (Paz, 1993, p.223)

use is sober, almost quiet, there is not a low level of contrast, as in this work color represents oppression.

The materials are intended as a metaphor for the rupture of the soul, these deep wounds that we have inside and do not know how to name. These paintings are the assimilation of all the aggressions I have seen done to the Mexican people and to myself. They represent the silent violence; a violence that wants to be invisible. As in Applebrog's work however, they are beautiful because the capacity to talk about difficult things regardless of the pain and to understand each other is ultimately a very good thing.

I utilized found cardboard and pieces of wood that had been disposed of to create the formats I work on. This creates a metaphor that evokes the concept of disposable people mentioned in the discussion of Slow Violence in Chapter 2. The shapes of the paintings are unconventional and nontraditional and move away from the use of the conventional rectangle. The corners are broken and materials are added or superimposed. Some of the paintings are diptychs of irregular proportions. In the "Imagery," I am suggesting the movements of the shadows filmed during the protests. I have also physically introduced some parts of the canvases created as a result of the workshop by laminating them into the surface. These canvases were done on house painters drop cloths. Some of the words are still visible but have become a new painting, adding another layer to the stories. Including these fragments of canvases is a way to bring their stories into the work -as if each painting has a story to tell, another story to relate. In some paintings, such as "*Mexican Bearers*" (See Figure 7), I am adding attachments, creating more sculptural paintings as an analogy of a strong emotion that cannot be contained anymore in its original shape, a no longer silent rage that grows inside and acquires its own voice that needs to break through. The paintings are

installed about an inch from the surface of the wall, and because the formats are broken, incomplete and disrupted, the shadows they create become an extension of the painting.

In some of the canvases, I obsessively wrote complete articles or phrases from the materials I used for the research, talking about racism, immigration, and discrimination. Most of the words have been painted over to evolve into a different shape but nevertheless lie there, as a layer of knowledge we have about these experiences and yet are still not heard, not read. I also painted some readable words, some of them to bring into attention the absurdity of the things we are being asked to become. For example in the painting titled “Learn how to be a Nobody,” there are readable words such as “relax,” “learn how to be a Nobody,” “be the shadow,” “nadie.” I wanted some words to be in Spanish and others in English since this represents the way immigrants live, through the expression of two languages, sometimes combining both. (See Figure 8.)

### The Video

When I was filming during the protests, many of the people asked me not to show their faces. The immigrant is often not ready to be identified; there may be too many emotions, especially where they are still living with no legal documents. This way of relating to the camera is a way of protecting themselves from being identified and being labeled different and not legal. Although I am here in a different situation, and I am a legal citizen, I feel and hurt for them. The Mexican people living in this country work and pay taxes. In fact, according to Randel K. Johnson, in the May 2011 publication of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce *Immigration Myths and Facts*, “the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) estimates that households headed by undocumented immigrants paid \$10.6 billion in

property taxes in 2010.”<sup>33</sup> When undocumented, immigrants can often make it through their school years without serious problems, but after graduating they have to move from one work situation to another because they do not have legal status. They are great workers and yet are not permitted to aspire to better jobs because of their legal status. Some individuals have been here for more than 20 years; their children are American citizens, born and raised here, and yet many still work in the fields and live in fear of being deported. Many families are separated through forced deportation, destroyed and treated inhumanely. In the article “Facing Our Future, Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement” the authors state that:

Hundreds of thousands of children have experienced the arrests of their parents in recent years, a report by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) estimated that over 100,000 parents with U.S. citizen children were deported over the past ten years –most likely a significant underestimate since parents often do not divulge the presence of children when they are arrested... The number of immigrants in ICE detention on an average day rose by 45 percent from about 21,000 in FY 2005 to about 31,000 in FY 2008. The total number of unauthorized immigrants deported annually increased from 206,000 in FY 2005 to 357,000 in FY 2008.<sup>34</sup>

In one of the protests I participated in, I had the opportunity to interview Dr. Errol Jones who I referenced above. He explained to me how over the years, powerful corporations ignored the laws and were hiring Mexicans without legal documents; even sending groups to

---

<sup>33</sup> (Johnson, 2011, p.11)

<sup>34</sup> (Chaudry, 2010, p.1)

Mexico to recruit people. They would be illegally brought into the U.S. and then turned loose, leaving them with an illegal status in the U.S. He says:

We have a broken immigration legal system that is really rather discriminatory.... we have to fix it. It's harmful to the entire community. It creates all kinds of dissension, it creates an underclass, it creates a distance between people that consider themselves to be legal...and anybody that is brown or speaks with an accent is a suspect. We have to change that and we have the opportunity to do that now.

I have heard many stories now, all of them very similar, all of them a terrible testimony of attacks against human rights.

There are hundreds of documentaries, books, stories to read and to be heard, and yet does anybody really listen? Do we really need another documentary telling what so many already know? Instead, I used the silhouettes/shadows as a metaphor of the internalized oppression that many experience. The video in my exhibition is a prayer that seeks intervention in the hope for change that eliminates these sources of oppression. In it I used images of shadows that I filmed during some of the protests and the words of a prayer offered by Padre Camacho. According to the New Oxford American Dictionary, a prayer is a solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God or an object of worship, and a protest is a statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something. When we pray we are devout and quiet in ourselves and we show respect, when we protest, we are loud and assertive. They both are sincere claims for change. I want my art to convey both meanings, I want my art to be heard as a protest against discrimination, in favor of human rights, and I want my art to be a ritual, a prayer for the abolition of racism in all its forms.

The first part of the video is literally a prayer. The shadows were all filmed during different protests that took place in Nampa and in Boise, Idaho. The shadows slowly overlap one image after another. Real time is altered, and the real sound of the scene is mute. Instead, I overlapped the sound of a prayer that one of our most important leaders in the local Latino community, Padre Jesus Camacho, delivered at one of the protests. The voice of Padre Camacho's prayer can be heard and some of the phrases are repeated over and over in the manner that we often do when we are praying, in this case: "oramos por la abolición del racismo en todas sus formas" (we pray for the abolition of racism in all its forms).

In an interview with Bill Viola, Alexander Pühringer et al, state that some artists working with video, including Bill Viola, "are dealing with *conditio humana*." In their work, they are "going back to the basic questions of existence. Video art can tell stories, there is a narrative element, and time plays an important role in video—unlike in other kinds of art like painting and sculpture."<sup>35</sup> Bill Viola uses time as one fundamental basis of his work. For him, "human beings, as all living things are essentially creatures of time...as instruments of time, the materials of video, and by extension the moving image, have as a part of their nature this fragility of temporal existence."<sup>36</sup> I play with time, disrupting linear time, in the first part by slowing the camera (the shadows move slow, softly, overlapping with one another, while we can hear the prayer of Padre Camacho), and in the second part by speeding it up (the real people, full color move full speed, fast and with many voices screaming, protesting, singing, and hoping for change).

---

<sup>35</sup> (Pühringer et al, 1994, p.152)

<sup>36</sup> (ibid, p.152)

In the first part of the video, I mix images of the protests overlapping the sound of a prayer to make it a ritual and a new prayer. In the development of the video, I eliminated much of the source material I had intended to work with. Ultimately, I wanted the image of the shadows to be the core of my work. I extend the meaning of the shadow by emphasizing their quality of anonymity. They can be anybody. The shadows can belong to a white, black, brown, yellow, or green person. It doesn't matter. In the prayer, we connect with our inner source, and that is what is important. I am playing with a double meaning of the shadow: the meaning of shadow that represents being a "Nobody" and the meaning of the shadow that represents being "Anybody." In this first part of the video, I treat the film as a painting, as a moving drawing. My intention is to invite the viewer to see it as a painting, in silence. In his short video, "Leonardo's Last Supper: A Vision" Peter Greenaway invites the viewer to experience a painting as a moment of real life. By playing with lights and close-ups, he creates time within the painting. I want to create a ritual, by treating a real life event as a painting, showing it in a way that can bring a deeper understanding of what it means to be an immigrant, and hopefully create some points of connection with the beholder.

In a similar manner to the way my work, I am stressing the "materials" in a way that the real images of the shadows are transformed into something different. (See Figure 8.) The shadows become the metaphor for this desire of not being identified, of being an immigrant, in fear of showing one's real identity. The images may not seem to have an identifiable source and yet they all come from a protest. The images are solemn, slow, and I alter the colors to be presented as something more ephemeral and sober.

The last part of the video shows the images of the protest, in full color, in movement at an artificially high-speed, overlapping the voices of people crying out for an immigration

reform. The prayer and the protest become one and the same, both seeking justice and hoping for a change that is long overdue. I want the contrast to be evident. In a way, it is an analogy that is the antithesis of the silent violence and the real effects. In this case, the protest is represented as a very loud and assertive scream for change. It is not any more a silent and polite favor to ask. It is a protest; there is anger and a direct loud claim for justice.

As Viola sees it, from the perspective of art history of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, images have moved onto other considerations: “it will become increasingly difficult for people to think of images as not being related to time.”<sup>37</sup> My intention in this video is to evoke the idea of creating change and transformation through movement. “Creativity and transformation of inspiration into action is a universal and fundamental part of humanity.”<sup>38</sup> Prayers for change, images moving, represent hope that things will not stand as they are.

In the video, the prayer and the silent shadows slowly come to an end and connect to people. When people appear in the video, color also appears. I want to give the shadows a specific character. The last part of the video is an accent, the other side of the prayer, the shadows coming out of their anonymity and becoming real people, real Mexican people protesting. They are, we are, Mexicans protesting: a loud scream of change.

---

<sup>37</sup> (Pühringer et al, 1994, p.152)

<sup>38</sup> (ibid, p.152)



## CONCLUSION

This country is divided when it comes to race, poverty, and gender. My art represents an honest attempt to approach this profound problem with integrity and conviction. Perhaps the best that art can ever do is to be a minimal expression of the depths of any issue. I am the artist, and like so many before me, I am documenting the present so that we may be able to heal this country and its future. As we have seen in recent protest movements around the world, social media has been used to tell the stories of those at the heart of the movement for change. My art captures the truth told by those who experience oppression and the attacks of racial discrimination as seen on the canvas of my paintings. In my video, I join in prayer with the beholder in hopes to abolish racism and discrimination in all its forms.

## REFERENCES

- Achotegui, Joseba. "Immigrants Living in Extreme Situation: Immigrant Syndrome with Chronic and Multiple Stress (The Ulysses Syndrome)." *"Norte" of the Spanish Association of Neuropsychiatry*. Vol. VII.No. 21 (2004): 39-53. Print.
- Art in the Twenty-First Century, POWER, Season 3*. Dir. PBS. Perf. Ida Applebroog. PBS, 2005. Film.
- Camnitzer, Luis. "Recent Latin American Art." *Art Journal* Vol 51.No. 4 (1992): 6-15. Print.
- Chaudry Ajay, Randy Capps, Juan Manuel Pedroza, Rosa Maria Castaneda, Robert Santos, and Molly M Scott. "Facing Our Future. Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement." *The Urban Insitute* 1 (2010): 1-80. Print.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968. Print.
- DeAngelis, Tori. "Unmasking 'racial micgoragressions'." *American Psychological Association* Vol 40.No.2 (2009): 42-45. <http://www.apa.org>. Web. 1 Feb. 2009.
- Detlaff, Allan J, and Ilze Earner. "Children of Immigrants in the Welfare System. Findings from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being" *Migration and Child Welfare National Network*. Boise, ID: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2008. Print.
- Forbes, Jack. *Columbus and Other Cannibals*. New York, NY: Seven Stories, 1979. Print.
- Gablik, Suzi. Connective Aesthetics Art After Individualism. In Lacy, Suzanne (eds.), *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle, Washington: Bay Press, 1995. 74-87. Print.
- Hanisch, Carol. "The Personal is Political." *Woman of the World, Unite!* Vol 1 (1969): n. pag. <http://carolhanish.org>. Web. 2 Jan. 2014.

- Helguera, Pablo. *Education for Social Engaged Art*. New York, NY: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011. Print.
- Herrera, Hayden. *Joan Snyder*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, incorporated, 2005. Print.
- Johnson, Randel K. *Immigration Myths and Facts*. Washington, DC: The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Labor, Immigration & Employee Benefits, 2011. Print.
- Gill, Jill K. "Latinos Continue to Fight Racism in Idaho." *Boise Weekly* 12 Feb. 2014, Winter 2014 ed., sec. Special Seccion. COLORBLIND? The Blue Review looks at race in Idaho: 7-8. Print.
- Lippard, Lucy. "Looking Around Where We are Where we Could be". In Lacy, Suzanne (eds.), *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle, Washington: Bay Press, 1995. 114-129. Print.
- Padillo, Laura M. "A Dirty Mexican: Internalized Oppression." *Hispanic Journal of Law and Policy* Volume 7.Fall (2001): 65-73. <http://academic.udayton.edu>. Web. 1 Sept. 2001.
- Paz, Octavio. "Transfigurations." *Essays on Mexican Art*. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993. 216-238. Print.
- Pipper, Adrian. "The Joy of Marginality". *Out of Order, Out of Sight. Volume 1*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT press, 1996. Print.
- Pitkin Derose, Kathryn, Jose J Escarce, and Nicole Lurie. "Immigrants and Health Care: Sources of Vulnerability." *Health Affairs* 1 May 2007: 1258-1268. Print.
- Pühringer, Alexander, Friedemann Maslch, Celia Montolio, Otto Neumaier, and Bill Viola. *Bill Viola*. Salzburg, Austria: SalzburgerKunstverein, 1994. Print.
- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London England: Harvard University Press, 2013. Print.
- Sanchez-Hucles, Janis V. "Racism: Emotional Abusiveness and Psychological Trauma for Ethnic Minorities." *Journal of Emotional Abuse* Vol 1.No.2 (1998): 69-87. Print.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York, Knopf: Vintage books, 1993. Print.

Wing Sue Derald. *Psychological Manifestation and Dynamics of Microaggressions*. USA: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication , 2007. Print.

Wing Sue Derald, Christina M. Capodilupo, Giina C. Torino, Jennifer M. Bucci, Aisha M.B. Holder, Kevin L. Nadal, and Martha Esquilin. "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life. Implications for clinical practice." *American Psychologist*. volume 62.No.4 (2007): 271-286. Print.

Zuehlke, Eric. "Immigrants Work in Riskier and More Dangerous Jobs in the United States." *Population Reference Bureau* 1 Nov. 2009: 1-5.  
<http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2009/usimmigrants>. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.

## APPENDIX

### **The Workshop: “Amate a ti misma: El mejor regalo para tus hijos” (Love Yourself: The Best Gift for Your Kids)**

For this art project I created a workshop to work intimately with Latino women (more specific: Mexican women). I worked in collaboration with Family Advocates which helped with contact information and promotion of the workshop and provided space, materials and snacks for the workshop; with Garden City Public Library which provided free books for the participant’s kids, and AmeriCorps. The idea of this workshop was to work with “my women’ stories in an art project where our voices can be heard. I also built community for us by building trust, creating a safe space where they could talk and heal.

The workshop consisted in 9 classes or reunions, me being the facilitator. Each reunion we started with a meditation that took the participants to an inner conversation with the issues treated (memories of the homeland, reasons for leaving, reasons for staying, building self-esteem and future dreams). After each meditation we created some visual work to support, share and discuss the inner experiences and new insights.

Sessions 1 and 2: Silhouettes comparing the moment of transition to this country and the self-perception when being uprooted, versus the real physical image.

Sessions 3 and 4: Understanding our own personal story, how we became what we are now and project our dreams into a more immediate future.

Sessions 5 and 6: Understanding how we inherit our own visions to our kids, learn how to convey our own memories to them so tradition won't die in the acculturation process.

Sessions 7, 8 and 9: Home visits to interact with their kids and closure. Filmed of the mothers reading the final letters they wrote to their kids about their personal stories.

#### Collaboration:

This project is collaboration between Family Advocates, Garden City Library, AmeriCorps and me artist Luz Camarena.

- AmeriCorps is a governmental institution that addresses critical community needs in education, public safety, health and the environment. In this project I worked for the Latino community related to mental health.
- Garden City has a large Latino population and one of my roles at GCPL is to outreach for the Latino community so they can benefit from their local library. By working with Latino women and bringing books to their kids I promoted the library services while invite them to get involved with the library.
- Family Advocates is a nonprofit organization that works with families. Their mission is to strengthen families by building the protective factors (social connections, parental resilience, knowledge of child development, attachment & bonding, concrete needs) so that all children are safe and nurtured. With the workshop we built community, help mothers to deal with their emotions and to develop a better communication with their partners and children.

**The Prayer: “Oramos por la Abolición del Racismo en todas sus formas”/ “We Pray for the Abolition of Racism in all its Forms”.**

By Padre Jesús Camacho, translated to English by Luz Camarena

Please join me in spirit and prayer. Let's all pray together.

God of the cultures, we pray for the million immigrants who live around the world in foreign and sometimes hostile countries.

Help us to see beyond the borders of our nation and the cities in which we live.

God of the poor, we pray for all the immigrant families who have restricted access to a home, food, medical care and education. We pray to stop the marginalization of the poor, so they can live with dignity. We pray so they can be provided with home that shelters them, life that nurtures them, health that sustains them and education that liberates them.

We pray for the ones who have been born in the United States of America, whose thoughts and actions are motivated with racial and ethnocentric attitudes against the ones who are born in other lands.

We pray for the abolition of racism in all its forms.

We pray for the ones who live in constant fear of being deported and separated from their families.

We pray for those families so they can stay together as it is Your desire.

We pray for all the ones who remind us that every human being has the right to have a life with dignity, no matter their race, ethnicity, sex, age, and economic or legal status.

In the undocumented sisters and brothers let us see Your Spirit, Oh God!

Helps us not forget that You and Your family were also immigrants trying to escape from King Herod who wanted to kill You and every primogenital male child.

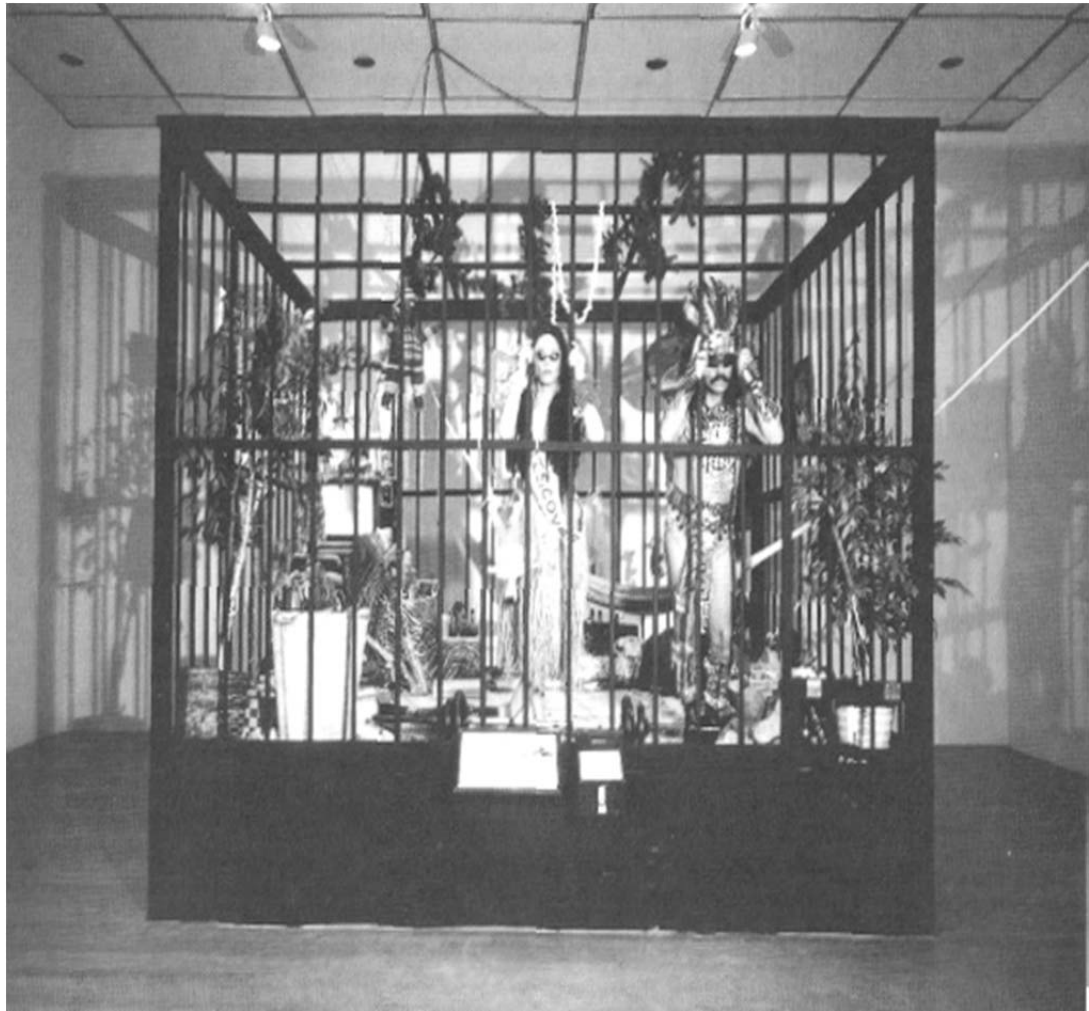
Help us to see Your presence in the oppressed.

Help us recognize the hand of the oppressor who oppresses when we decide to stay silent.

Amen.



## FIGURES



**Figure 1. “A Couple in the Cage”**

Performance art by Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez -Peña, dressing up as Amerindians and being caged for display in various places such as Plaza in Madrid, the Australian Museum of Natural History in Sydney, the Smithsonian’s Museum of Natural History, London’s convent gardens and several other places. The performers chose the areas because they felt these countries indigenous people.



**Figure 2. Silhouette from the Workshop**



**Figure 3. Photograph form One of The Protestors**



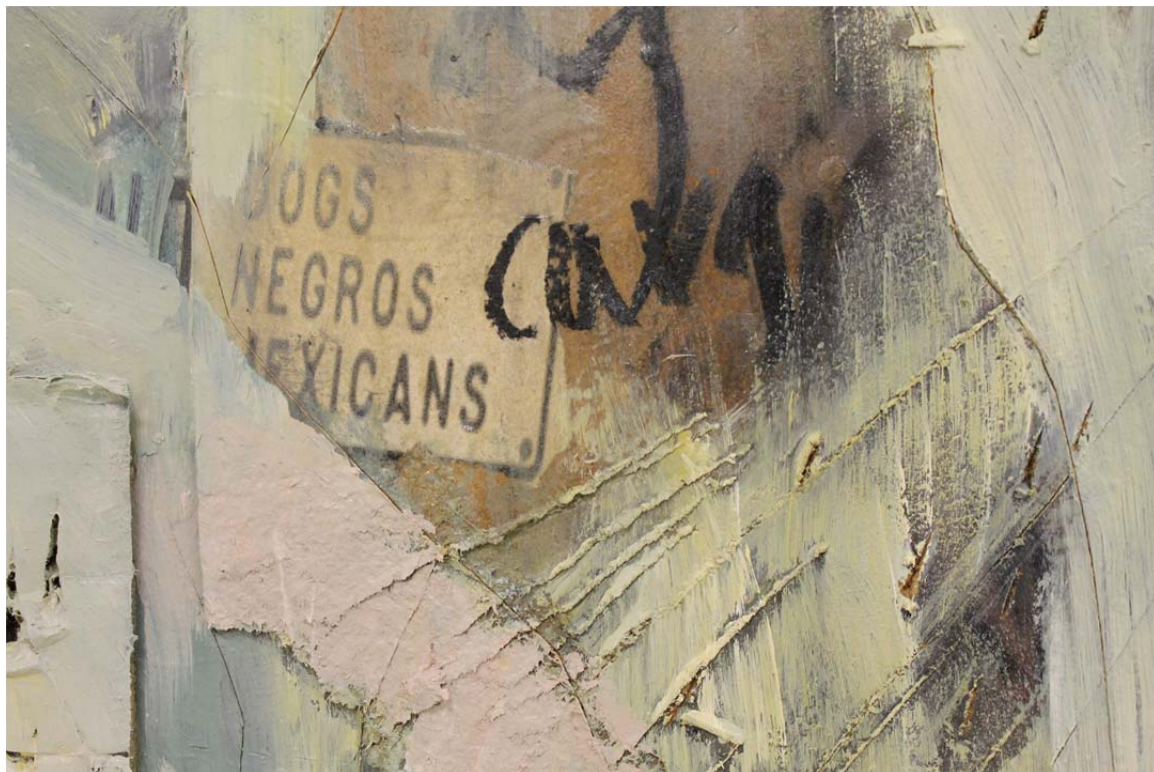
**Figure 4. “Marginalia (Bandage Head)”**

Ida Applebroog, 1991. Oil and resin gel on canvas 43” x 48”



**Figure 5. “Antiquarum Lacrimae”**

Joan Snyder, 2004; acrylic, dried flowers on linen.

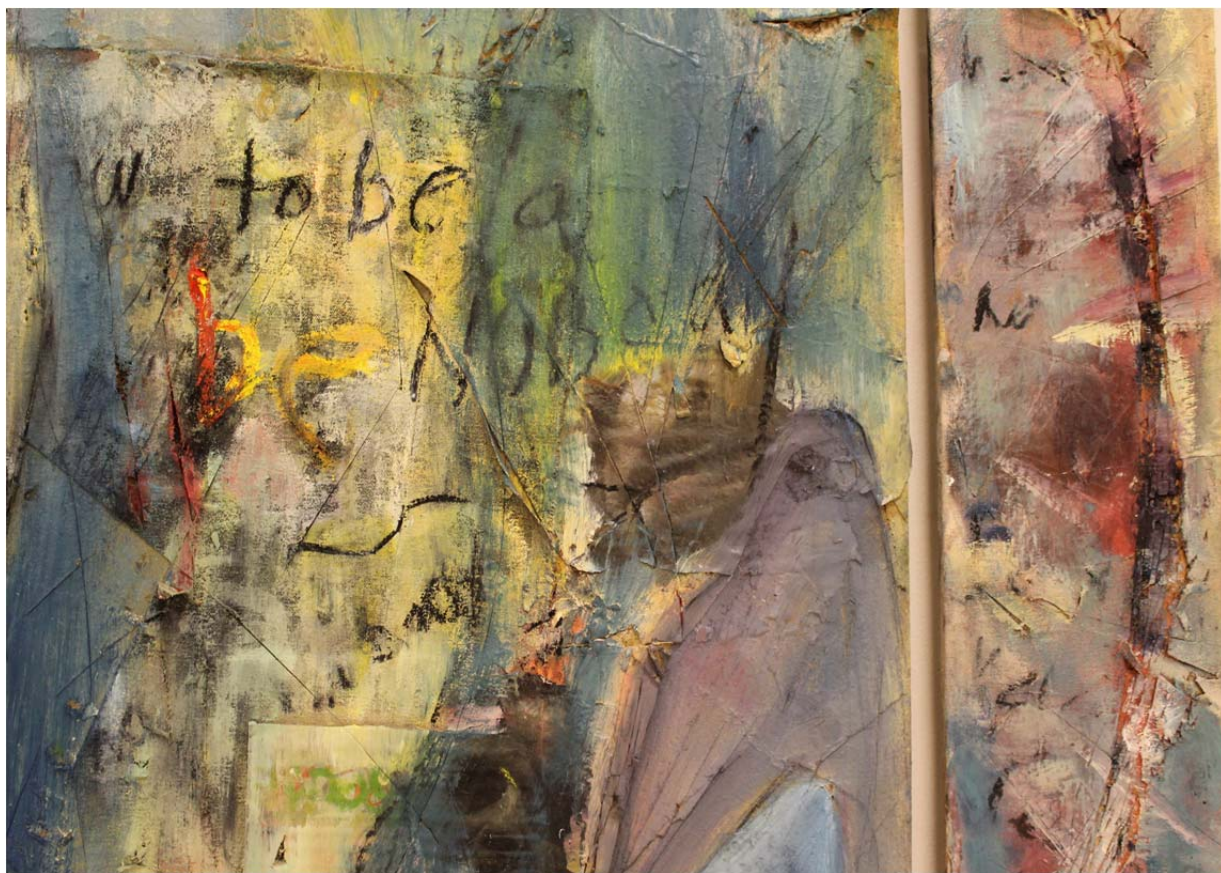


**Figure 6. “Carajo/Shit (fragment)”**

Luz Camarena, 2014. Mixed Media. 45”x42”



**Figure 7. “Mexican Bearers”**  
Luz Camarena, 2014, Mixed Media, 49”x61”



**Figure 8. “Learn How to be a Nobody (Fragment)”**

Luz Camarena, 2014, Mixed media, 49”x36”