

# Subversive Classroom Practices

## Addressing the Barriers between Us and that Future via Deep Rhetoricity

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**Abstract:** So often left unquestioned within academia is how to be-and-think-with others beyond the axes of academic theories-values, unhinged from rhetorics of propriety, and unseated from automatic equations between a position/ality and

disposition. In our 2022 article, “Deep Rhetoricity as Methodological Grounds for Unsettling the Settled,” we introduced deep rhetoricity as an intervention into rhetorical practices of doing and as a praxis of invention within the same context. Our conversation was introductory, as we tentatively outlined and animated the inward epistemic principles of deep rhetoricity meant to unsettle the settled-ness of self, being, and doing: returns, careful reckonings, enduring tasks. In this companion piece centered on addressing the theme of barriers between us and that future, we open a conversation on the relational framework of being, doing, and thinking-with others within deep rhetoricity. Still in the exploratory stage, we tentatively outline and illustrate the outward epistemic principles of deep rhetoricity meant to unsettle the settled-ness of relationality: returns, careful reckonings, and being-with. The goal of this essay is to call for and work towards establishing a foundation to explore a relational framework of being-and-thinking-with others vis-à-vis deep rhetoricity. The essay features the hopes-struggles of rhetorical scholars and educators as well as illustrate the complexities, complicatedness, and missingness of doing human work and carrying out human projects-with others. Such friction amplifies the demand to learn how to be-and-think-with others otherwise.

**Keywords:** deep rhetoricity, classroom, stories, careful reckonings,

In our CCC 2022 article, “Deep Rhetoricity as Methodological Grounds for Unsettling the Settled,” we (Gesa and Romeo) preliminarily sketched out *deep rhetoricity*. We acknowledged in that essay *rhetoricity* can convey a *doing* such as historiographic, archival, feminist rhetorical, and decolonial research, among other forms. At the onset, however, it was deliberated and determined that in the next iteration of conversations on *doing* what needed to be reemphasized was the *unsettling of the settled*. Our hope, as appealed by indigenous scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, was for an unsettling of self-being anchored by identity politics or benevolent lexicography; knowledge production organized by axes of academic theories-values inextricably linked to modern/colonial projects of territorial and epistemological expropriation; and politics of critical positioning detached from location and disengaged from the particularities and specificities in which power unfolds. *Deep rhetoricity* was our attempt to intervene in a *doing* undaunted by the hauntings, unscathed by the haunting situations, and unfazed by the *wounded/ing spaces-places* of a modern/colonial world system.<sup>1</sup> The actor-agent of this *doing* recognizes nobody exists outside of such and thus has it figure prominently in *returns* to spaces-places where one *does* and *thinks*.<sup>2</sup>

We advance a *doing* accountable and responsible to self(ves), others (broadly conceived), and communities. In the spirit of Gayatri Spivak, we set out to think of a *doing* not purely academic, situated squarely as a responsibility to what is formalizable (e.g., responding - being answerable to a call to action), what must *endure* (e.g., the ungraspable), and to the trace of the *other* (radical contamination). Such a *doing* underscores an ethos unhinged from an allegiance to a proper name or finality and grounded instead in being present to self(ves), others (nonliving, non-human), and the infinite demand for getting caught up. In the vein of Donna Haraway and Linda Alcoff’s work on epistemology, situated knowledge, and truth, we also conceived of a *doing* un-

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1 . See Till (6).

2 . See Mignolo, *Darker Side of Western Modernity* (xvi).

seated from automatic equations between a position/ality and disposition. Herein lies its formation as praxis insofar that it is a *doing* grounded in becoming ready to be answerable for how one has come to walk and see the world and interact and exchange meaning with *others*. *Deep rhetoricity* was our wager all *doing* demands as a starting point the corporeal exercise of addressing oneself to hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings as obligation-responsibility. The actor-agent of this *doing* would embody an ethos and praxis of *unsettling the settled*.

*Deep rhetoricity* is our attempt to situate ethos and praxis in the elsewhere and *otherwise*. Alcoff argues we need to relearn how to make truth claims and reconstruct epistemology. That is a course-of-action, however im/possible, we accept, and one that demands the language of constellations and coalitions. A truth: our *stories-so-far* are a cosmo of constellated hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings. The racist Arthur de Gobineau understood the world was being staged for a haunting-and-ghostly totality to become a *structure of feeling*: “so long as even their shadows remain [e.g., monuments], the building[s] stands [e.g., economic, authorial, educational, political, and knowledge], the body seems to have a soul, the pale ghost walks” (33). Though not all feel equally the haunt in their bones, we argue in our essay, we are all in this palimpsest narrative—Raymond Williams’ *structures of feeling* or Michael Taussig’s *public secret*—of settler sites, haunted/ing communities, and wounded/ing spaces-places. It will take a coalition to unstage such a totality. In the spirit of Karen Barad, Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, and others then, *deep rhetoricity* is about the staging of an epistemic *doing* that fractures barriers between us (living, nonliving, nonhuman) to make visible invisible structures of feeling that attune us.<sup>3</sup> The actor-agent of this *doing* is driven by an ethic of being-and-thinking-with others otherwise that underscores critical frameworks of feminist rhetorical practices and coalition-building. This doing is animated and facilitated though by the epistemic principles of *returns*, *careful reckonings*, and *enduring tasks* to ensure a responsibility beyond mere representation.

The focus of our previous essay is on the inward process of *deep rhetoricity*. By couching ethos and praxis in hauntings, inheritances, and dwelling as language, rhetoric, and corporeal exercises of address we are afforded the opportunity to deliberate *an-other* set of choices, options, and responsibilities. We concur with scholars such as Jacques Derrida, Avery Gordon, Sylvia Wynters, and others that *an-other epistemological framework for the living* is needed; one predicated on an ontology of truth not instituted by an epistemology that dehumanizes and devalues human beings (*coloniality of knowledge*) but one that strives to liberate, however im/possible, pluriversal truths and constellated truths; one that partakes in responsible and accountable knowledge production instead of idealized reconstructions of knowledge; one that underscores a humanness in the service of *others*, a being human as praxes. What continues to be at stake in our inability to live or have something in-common is the *possibilities of new stories*. The actor-agent of this *doing* foregoes the given-ness and peels back the layers of what is constituted as settled. To begin every conversation on *doing with* hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings is to station self-be-

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3 See Brasher et al. (292-294); A. Gordon (184; 190); Maldonado-Torres (262); Rushdy (33; 57; 174).

ing within that intermediary stage between what is formalizable and what must *endure* as an *ongoing task*. This is the very space-place of *deep rhetoricity*.<sup>4</sup>

We acknowledge that *deep rhetoricity* can be aligned with the Modernity/Coloniality Collective's prospective task and feminist and coalitional work. A *return* to hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings is a *return* to *where one does and thinks*; a *careful reckoning* with the settled-ness of self-being is a *learning* how to *unlearn* cultural and thinking programs to *relearn* how to *be-and-think-with* self(ves), others, and communities *otherwise*; and the *enduring task* of getting caught up is a commitment to hope-struggle. But because the impetus for *deep rhetoricity* was to go beyond mere critique of Western epistemology and advance a *doing* attuned to the messiness of life, agency, and coalitional work, we did not advance it as a decolonial project.<sup>5</sup> For anything with a proper name, and the irony is not lost on us here, prescribes a proper method of seeing, being, and doing.<sup>6</sup> The same goes with feminist-coalition work and the advancement of a certain form of agency. *Deep rhetoricity* emerges in the vein of Saba Mahmood and Kenna Neitch, where agency is not a synonym for resistance, subversion, and/or resignification of hegemonic norms but rather reflective of a capacity for action that haunting(s)-situation(s) enable and create. It neither portends to be a panacea nor a mechanized application of a proper method but rather a commitment to/wards *unsettling the settled*. The actor-agent of this *doing* engages reconstructive work in epistemology to surrender formal representations of proper names, producing a rupture, creating a clearing, and initiating an opening. This must remain most vital within feminist rhetorical practices and coalitional work where the door must remain open to anyone, *wherever they may be* (Fanon) and in the *non-name of all* (Acosta).

The reconstruction of epistemology that we forward in this essay is based on the outward-facing aspects of *deep rhetoricity*. Its epistemic principles-as-heuristics are not a panacea but build on that hope for a future of mutual wor(l)ding animated by a struggle to unsettle “the barriers between us” (Lorde 57). Like our previous essay, our goal is to open up a conversation, this time on *being-and-thinking-with* others *otherwise*. The relational framework we advance in this essay is informed by feminist and coalitional work as well as scholars such as Audre Lorde, Jim Corder, Joy, Ritchie, Frantz Fanon, María Lugones, bell hooks, Jacqueline Jones Royster, Andrea Riley Mukavetz, and Ana Ribero and Sonia Arellano. We tentatively outline three epistemic principles that are introductory and subject to revision. They are not carried out evenly in this essay but figure prominently throughout. The principles are as follows:

- *Returns* to our ways of walking and seeing the world.

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4 . See Alcoff (70-71; 76); A. Gordon (190); Derrida (46); Mignolo and Walsh (170).

5 . See acknowledge Cusicanqui (98-104); Fukushima (14-15); Tlostanova and Mignolo (7).

6 . But as Spivak would say, “all complicities are not equivalent” (63; 59).

- *Careful reckonings* with our understandings of *being-and-thinking-with* and exchanging meaning with others.
- Being-*with*, or a commitment of *being-and-thinking-with* others (past-present-future; environment; living, nonliving, nonhuman) *otherwise*.

Though incomplete, we believe the above epistemic principles are points-of-references that can put feminist rhetorical practices and coalition-building on pathways towards the *possibilities of new stories* amid troubling times and pedagogical challenges. In this context, *deep rhetoricity* will remain quite ambitious in what it strives for, intervention through the *unsettling of the settled* and (re/co)-invention for the sake of relearning how to see and walk the world and interact and exchange meaning with others *otherwise*<sup>7</sup>. The modification to rhetoricity here is less about achieving rhetorical effect and more about making visible the work of *doing* before us all. Such *doing* will echo the undertones of love, care, healing, and learning that are so important to and within frameworks of feminist rhetorical practices and coalition-building work.

Feminist coalition-building, as we envision it, is rooted in principles articulated and advocated by feminist scholars and activists over several decades. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss those principles in detail, we list a number of them below to situate our work and to acknowledge the important work and legacies of feminist activist scholars, scholars who have charted multiple paths for us; have insisted on making commitments to community, collaboration, and coalition-building; and have created/ claimed spaces for women (and women-identified people) whose voices and perspectives that have long been missing, ignored, silenced, or erased from public memory (Applegarth, Buchanan & Ryan, Enoch, Glenn, Logan, Ratcliffe, Royster). Among the feminist activist principles that ground our work are the following:

- questioning the status quo of gendered, hetero-normative, social, political, cultural, economic systems that privilege small groups of people while disempowering/alienating a large number of others, whose stories, lived experiences, and communities have been deemed unimportant, marginal, or deliberately omitted from public narratives (Butler; Duplessis and Snitow; Hanish; Rich).
- questioning epistemological/ontological assumptions of research methods and methodologies and the ethos/ethical practices of researchers. While it is now commonplace among rhetoric and writing studies scholars to reflect on their membership in and commitment to the communities they are studying, early feminist scholars and activists were the ones who insisted on and argued for the importance of these principles (Bizzell, Gilligan, Jagger, Harding, hooks, Lorde, Spivak, Royster, Smith, Sando-

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<sup>7</sup> See A. Gordon (5); Maldonado-Torres (251); Corder (23; 25; 31); Lorde (409); Fanon; Lugones; hooks (67).



val).

- reflecting on one's own ethos as scholars, teachers, community members, and activists (Ryan, Myers and Jones) while working toward reciprocity and collaboration among researchers and community members (Alcoff; Chilisa; Cushman; Powell and Takayoshi; Riley-Mukavetz). That means scholars engage in shared knowledge-building, work with community members who set priorities for the research agenda and for best use of (re)sources—in contrast to Western research practices steeped in traditions of gathering/extracting/exploiting information from community members that can—and have—caused great harm (Caswell; Hughes-Watkins; McCracken and Hogan; Cushman). Reciprocity and collaboration involve *listening* to community members and *centering* their needs, values, and perspectives rather than imposing the researchers' agenda, questions, and values on the community. It also involves protecting the dignity, respect, and autonomy of those we study with an emphasis on fair, ethical, dignified portrayals of research participants and building communities of solidarity.
- developing new tools, frameworks, and methodologies for conducting research, such as the analytical frameworks articulated by Royster and Kirsch (critical imagination, strategic contemplation, social circulation, and globalization/ transnationalism). It entails efforts to disrupt/unsettle supposedly “neutral /objective points of view” which tend to reflect white western male perspectives. Moreover, it comes with efforts to narrate a greater variety of stories and more complex, diverse representation of human experiences (Graban, Gutenson and Robinson, McDuffie and Ames, Logan, Royster, Schell, VanHaitsma).
- working toward a sense of care, well-being, and love towards those we work with (Corder, hooks, Lorde). Feminist scholars have long recognized that relationships of care can and do create unequal power relations, yet rather than avoiding those inequalities, feminist scholars and activists have challenged researchers to acknowledge potential power differentials and apply an ethics of care to support those who might find themselves in vulnerable positions (Gilligan, Noddings, Tronto).

Embracing *deep rhetoricity* as an intervention into the settled can be helpful to feminist activist and coalitional principles. First, because an ethos and praxis of *unsettling the settled* remains oriented to power structures and hierarchies based in Western settler colonialism, coloniality, patriarchy, and capitalism. Second, because the epistemic principles of *deep rhetoricity* as heuristics underscore deliberative intentions to produce ruptures, create clearings, and initiate openings. Joy Ritchie warned experiences are not universal, strategic essentialism is only a temporary point of

departure, and self-analysis and reflexivity are vital to collective work. Uninterested in hand-waving or “virtue signaling,” we advance a *doing* that incessantly grounds a question, **where are the lessons of ethos and praxis being proposed from?** If we are where we *do* and *think* then hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings must figure prominently in *doings*. And third, because embracing *deep rhetoricity* is about standing at the nexus of an-other’s *stories-so-far* and *possibilities of new stories* as an ethic of love, care, healing, and learning.

The goal of this essay is to animate each facet of the outward-facing aspects of *deep rhetoricity* some of which occurs within the classrooms in which we teach. Our essay below is organized into two sections. In the first section, we explore the barriers between us and a future *otherwise*; the hope-struggle that underscore both possibilities as well as the complexities, complicatedness, and messiness of *doing* human work and carrying out human projects. Such reflections are necessary because sometimes theory and theoretically informed praxis do not easily translate or bode well in practice. This section includes case studies drawn from Kirsch and García’s research and teaching at two different institutions. The second section offers a reflection by all four co-authors, guided by two questions: one, what does feminist coalition-building mean? And two, what does feminist coalition building look like? Such a reflection is necessary given an essay that aims to illustrate how feminist coalition-building might work among a group of four co-authors with diverse backgrounds, lived experiences, and academic standing/privilege.

## The Barriers Between Us and that Future

The discussion that follows draws on examples from undergraduate and graduate courses that Kirsch and García teach. We share examples of how we resist palimpsest narratives that aim to normalize haunted/ing *structures of feeling* (Williams; Gordon), smooth frictions (Lueck and Nasr), hide fissures (Mignolo), and keep the dark corners (and secrets) of history out of sight and out of mind (Bunch). The discussion aims to animate our attempts at implementing the outward epistemic principles of *deep rhetoricity* amid troubling times and pedagogical challenges.

Kirsch reflects on one question that animates this essay: How can we learn to practice *being-and-thinking-with* others *otherwise* in and out of the classroom? Drawing on an undergraduate course, “Writing the Archives,” Kirsch offers a discussion of her feminist commitments and coalition-building practices by working with two student authors, Valeria Guevara Fernandez and Nicole Salazar, who reflect on their own experiences of working with primary sources, conducting archival research, and engaging in feminist coalition-building and activism. Rather than speaking *for or about* students, Kirsch decided to invite students to *be-with/in* this essay as coauthors, sharing their insights, reflections, and challenges of *unsettling settled* histories. Kirsch imagines and enacts a pedagogy that invites pathways of *learning to unlearn as being-with*, highlighting the possibilities of the outward-facing principles of *deep rhetoricity* and the opportunities that can arise when we find a productive tension between intervention, our current sets of *stories-so-far*, and

invention, the *possibilities of new stories*.

García reflects on a recent experience in Tokyo and then segues by recalling work he does *with* students at the University of Utah (UoU). He then contends with a *coloniality of instruction-and-curriculum* (broadly conceived) in Utah. García proceeds by making an argument for the utility of settler archival research as place-based pedagogy that invites students to *return* to and *carefully reckon* with how their *stories-so-far* and everyday adhere to, interact with, and carry out the histories, cultural memories, and literacy-rhetorical practices settler archives represent. He reflects on failures and minimal successes in an undergraduate course, “Intermediate Writing,” that marks the interplay between a hope for wor(l)ding a future *otherwise* and the struggle to unsettle “the barriers between us and that future” (Lorde 57) through the human work-projects of *unsettling the settled*, *being-and-thinking-with*, and mutual deliberation-determination of *an-other* set of choices, options, and responsibilities.

## Standing at the Nexus of Stories-so-far and the Possibilities-of-New-Stories

In this section, I [Gesa] explore the outward-facing epistemic principles of *deep rhetoricity* against the backdrop of pedagogical challenges and opportunities. In many ways, *deep rhetoricity* resonates with the challenge posed by Audre Lorde:

... looking out and beyond to the future we are creating, [recognizing that] we are part of communities that interact, ... and arm[ing] ourselves with accurate perceptions of the barriers between us and that future” (57).

Lorde’s call anchors the three inward epistemic principles of *deep rhetoricity* as an ethos and praxis of *returns* to our local histories of hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings; *careful reckonings* with self as the place of multiple returns and becomings; and *enduring tasks* of this work. What prompts me to continue exploring *deep rhetoricity* is the potential of the outward journey: the epistemic principle of standing at the nexus of another’s set of *stories-so-far* and *possibilities of new stories*.

When we envision “standing at the nexus” of these two spaces, we invoke movement, fluidity, change—all *enduring tasks*. Drawing inspiration from Lorde and from hooks, who reminds us that “solidarity requires sustained, outgoing commitment,” I invite students, in an upper division course on “Writing the Archives” to explore what it means to *unsettle settled* histories, to confront hauntings and inheritances, and to establish an ethos and praxis that address the barriers between us and another future via a praxis of *being-with* others, *otherwise*. In the course, we study—and contribute to—many different kinds of archives, including personal and family archives, community archives, digital archives, ephemeral archives, and archives-in-the-making. In the syllabus,



I describe the course goals as follows:

This seminar explores archives as sites of cultural interpretation, civic engagement, and social change. We will explore a broad range of archives, including family archives, community archives, digital archives, and institutional archives. Drawing on feminist, rhetorical, indigenous, decolonial, and other perspectives, we will focus on what stories, social memories, and public histories can emerge from archival research, and just as important, what remains hidden, missing, silenced, or erased in archival collections. We will also study how archives in your concentration can illuminate the histories, intellectual frameworks, and methodologies of your field of study.

The course readings are interdisciplinary and include work by feminist and feminist rhetorical scholars, Indigenous scholars, and African American scholars, amongst others. We read chapters from *Unsettling Archival Research* (Kirsch, García, Allen and Smith), articles from a special issue of the digital journal *Across the Disciplines* with the theme *Unsettling the Archives*, and articles by critical archival scholars. One of the articles that became a powerful touchstone in class was Michelle Caswell's "Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives and the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation." Caswell explains that she adapted the term *symbolic annihilation* from "feminist media scholars in the 1970s" who use it to "describe what happens to members of marginalized groups when they are absent, grossly under-represented, maligned, or trivialized..." (27). Caswell deliberately calls out the willful erasure, disremembering, and omission of records that are part and parcel of many institutional "capital-A" archives, archives that represent on a limited version of history: that of the powerful, wealthy, often white-identified men. She cautions:

"If archives are to be true and meaningful reflections of the diversity of society instead of distorted funhouse mirrors that magnify privilege, then they must dispense with antiquated notions of whose history counts and make deliberate efforts to collect voices that have been marginalized by the mainstream" (p. 36).

In class discussion the term "symbolic annihilation" resonated as both a powerful and haunting concept, offering students an entry point, a measure, a criterion for assessing what happens when "stories-so-far" are missing entirely from public discourse/memory and thereby negate the "possibilities of new stories."

The first half of the semester we focused on readings and case studies that illustrate how researchers can engage in reciprocal work, contribute to the communities they are studying, and produce narratives that *unsettle settled* histories. Students undertake three assignments: an "archival adventure," a low-stakes exploratory assignment that invites discovery of personal or family archives and reflection on what constitutes an archive, how collections are created, and how memory/ meaning are attached to artifacts. The second assignment explores the conventions

of a research proposal and asks students to articulate an original research project that draws on primary sources housed in a digital archive and/or one that builds on the archival adventure. The third assignment asks students to conduct the research they proposed in the second assignment. That is, students follow through on the research goals they set, including analyzing and interpreting primary sources from digital archives, and/or creating original sources via conducting interviews/collecting materials, and/or examining artifacts in small-a archives.

In all three assignments I invite students to see themselves as researchers who reflect on *stories-so-far* and, in the process, work toward the *possibilities of new stories* that might evolve, challenge, or amend *stories-so-far*. I ask students to practice reciprocity, a *being-and-thinking-with*, to make a contribution to the community(ies) they study and/or the archives they work with, so that the archival research they are conducting can enable the *possibilities of new stories*. One of the evaluation criteria for the final assignment, the original research project, addresses outcome, impact, and contribution.

The writer clearly explains how conclusions are drawn, what contributions the research makes, and considers the impact of the research, including likely impact on intended audiences. The writer considers potential reciprocity, benefits, harms to participants/community. Explains how the results will be disseminated and why these means are appropriate to the subject matter and audience.

Finally, I invite students to articulate the contribution(s) they might be able to make to the communities they are studying. In many ways, this assignment sequence aligns with García's portfolio requirements: constituted by *returns home* (archival adventure), *careful reckonings* with *stories-so-far* (research proposal) and a commitment to reciprocity, to *being-and-thinking-with others*, *otherwise* (original research project).

In the hyperlinks below, readers encounter the words and work of **Valeria Guevara Fernandez** and **Nicole Salazar** who describe and reflect on their archival research projects and what that work means to them. Guevara Fernandez's research project touches on the many ways in which archival materials can get flattened, homogenized, erased; her research focused on holdings in the University of Louisville (UofL) Oral History Center. What caught her attention were nine oral histories—testimonios actually (more on this below)—all classified with a single, generic description: "Latin Americans – United States." As she was about to embark on her research, Guevara Fernandez reflects:

"As I was browsing through the long list of subjects, a specific one caught my attention: "Latin Americans - United States". The lack of detail in its title is what drew me in the most. Was this an archive about immigration? Politics? Xenophobia?"

As Guevara Fernandez quickly discovered, issues of access, selection, power, and privilege are deeply intertwined with archival holdings. She deliberately positioned herself at the nexus of *stories-so-far* and the *possibilities of new stories* by making a critical intervention: engaging in archival labor. She contacted Heather Fox, the director of the UofL Oral History Center and started a fruitful collaboration, taking on the role of “activist archivist” (Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge) and serving as a vital contributor to the archives by creating new records, coding interviews in both Spanish and English, analyzing themes, and making visible the lost and hidden histories contained in these testimonios. Quite literally, Guevara Fernandez began creating *presence from absence and sounds from silence* with her research project.

For Nicole Salazar, connections of *stories-so-far* and the *possibilities-of-new-stories* were invoked when she began her archival adventure by sorting through bins of her grandmother’s clothing, many of which were sewn by her grandmother, an accomplished seamstress who worked in factories that produced designer fashion.

“My grandma worked many jobs as she was raising my mom and my aunts. All her jobs always had something to do with sewing, whether it be swimsuits when she worked at La Sirena, costumes while she worked at a factory called Clemente, or luxury purses and belts at the Louis Vuitton factory not too far from her house.”

As Nicole sorted through the bins, she came upon a pair of well-worn, low-rise jeans, an item of clothing that she learns tells the story of intergenerational, border-crossing connections. Here, we see Nicole “bearing and being a witness to stories-so-far and embracing the possibilities of new stories that she is able to embody, a college student and athlete.” Nicole reflects:

“The majority were memories of my mom since the clothes used to be hers with an occasional piece or two of my Nina’s but when I showed her a pair of light washed low-rise Levi’s, my grandma had lots to share... The low-rise Levi’s were hers when she was in her early 20s and later on she passed them down to my mom. To think that this pair of denim was over twice my age and had seen more of the world than I had was mind blowing. I was so excited to think that a pair of jeans that were once my grandma’s and then my mom’s could be mine, and that I could make my own memories with them. Once we finished running through the other items I selected, I rushed to try on my new pairs of jeans. I put them on and I immediately felt a sense of belonging. Not only because they fit like a glove, but also because I felt like I filled in the missing part of a puzzle. I had the opportunity to carry on the lineage of the Levi’s that had been well loved by my family before me; it felt like an honor to wear them.”

Nicole’s discovery of her grandmother’s sewing skills and sense of fashion led Nicole to a research project focused on a community where fashion and style are used as elements of activ-

ism: the community of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. Through exploring an archive in the making, that of the Los Angeles house of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, and conducting interviews with current sisters, Nicole was able to reckon with *stories-so-far*, build solidarity across communities, and learn to *be with/think with* others, *otherwise*.

## An Experience of the Im/Possible

Recently, I (Romeo) was in Japan with the family. We visited TeamLab Planets (Tokyo), an art installation that aims to unsettle barriers between self and boundaries, self and artwork, and self and others. Its theme, “Together with Others, Immerse your Entire Body, Perceive with your Body, and Become One with the World,” is aspirational, an invitation to learn how to *be-and-think-with* others *otherwise* —*an archival impression*.. Activities peeled back layers of accessories (quasi bare-life), unsettled the grounds on which we walk (obscuring the senses), and simulated journeys from darkness to light (regeneration of life).<sup>8</sup> Feminist and coalitional principles were unavoidable. And a decolonial ethic, ethos, and praxis of learning-unlearning-relearning was not lost on me.<sup>9</sup> But the full-body immersive experience, for which I will call a decolonizing archival impression, was actually more emblematic of spoke more to the inward and outward facing aspects of *deep rhetoricity*. *Deep rhetoricity*, conceives of our *stories-so-far* as archives, its epistemic principles the vehicle in which to engage in a slow and deep (de) and (re)-compositioning of self. *Returns and careful reckonings* reposition the contents of our archives so that we can reposition ourselves in relation to it *otherwise* while *enduring tasks* invite the ongoing process of initiating archival impressions *otherwise*.

*Returns*. The first installation, “Waterfall of Light Particles at the Top of an Incline,” invites participants to enter a space of darkness and water. Both are intended to unsettle the grounds by which one walks and sees; one is but walking into the abyss of darkness amongst other shadows. It was not lost on me either the significance of entering spaces-places as *stories-so-far* and the symbolism of water both in its ability to restore self(ves) and invite a re-connection with [We/arth]—we are all in and part of an archive. The second installation, “Soft Black Hole--Your Body becomes a Space that Influences another Body,” invites participants into an ever-changing space. The beanbags succumb to the weight of others and in turn affects the bodies of others; an archive and its archival impressions. It is meant to underscore how we always already stand at the nexus of an-other’s *stories-so-far* and the *possibilities of new stories*. How then, I wondered, do we become more intentional with the way we initiate such impressions?

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*Careful reckonings*. Perhaps the most moving installations was “Floating in the Falling Uni-  
8 . See Mignolo, “Epistemic” (3)

9 . See Tlostanova and Mignolo (7).

verse of Flowers.” We laid down amongst other shadows and *playfully world-traveled* (Lugones) into the universe of the seasonal bloom, change, and de-composition (diastema). Individuality ceased to be, shadows coalesced, and in a moment in time the space was but the substance of humanity and air the song of [We/arth-ly] particles *being-and-thinking-with* others —archival impressions constellating an archive. The decentralization of self and other meant we were once again distributed of the same root and that all bodies (living, nonliving, nonhuman) were one heart reflecting its surroundings; [We] were all just Matter. It was in this moment that I came to realize that the story of life before us all was not that of the [I] or the [You] but of the [We/arth]. And in that story, *being-and-thinking-with* others no longer meant finding the proper words or identifying a proper way but rather what [We] hoped would live-on (*sur-vie*) in the wor(l)ding of a future of the [We/arth] after our own de-composition; a Matter-ing otherwise.<sup>10</sup>

*Enduring tasks.* Every installation immersed the senses in a way to illustrate the effects of presence and consequences of that presence. They amplified the ability for non-humans to (re)attune and of non-humans to alter the ambience. “The tragedy” of a human being, Fanon (echoing Nietzsche) would tell us, “is that [we were] once a child” (231). Yet, in the art installation I was like Chihiro in *Spirited Away* who could see, feel, and hear the wind of the [Earth] pull, once again because all the years were inside of me. For a moment, I was a child again--before the interruption that unsettled my childhood--and existed within a cosmo of fleeting glimpses, borderless worlds, and endless possibilities beyond myself. Life, agency, and rhetoric shifted in register to shared values: *where will we choose to stand in order to see, welcome, know, be present to, and be a witness to an-other? what will we have wanted from one another after we tell our stories-so-far?* But then came the interruption that ended the exhibit and the question of whether I or a *generous reciprocity* will ever have arrived somewhere, someday?<sup>11</sup> The *enduring task* for me was (re)learning how to reconnect with a doing that I once knew.

The exhibit was about *stories-so-far* and the *possibilities of new stories*. That is a feminist aspiration. *Deep rhetoricity* can help facilitate its principles in nuanced ways though by ensuring *returns, careful reckonings, and enduring tasks* remain at the fore. The exhibit was about hope-struggle. That is a coalitional *longing*. *Deep rhetoricity* can advance its principles in nuanced ways though with an ethic of *being-and-thinking-with* which assures in the words of indigenous and native feminist scholars such as Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill that *longing* remains “people-possessed” rather than “individually self-possessed” (25). I thought to myself after the experience, “if an art installation that is a byproduct of human *doings* could create such dispossessions in me there is no reason to believe such im/possibilities are subject to a specific time frame in life.” Sandra Cisneros’ poem, “Eleven,” speaks to this: “all the years inside of me--ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two and one” (n.p.). I am both an archive, “repositories of feeling and emotions” (Cvetkovich (7), and an “archive in the making” (Browne 51). Perhaps, the

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10 . See Derrida, SoM (xx); García, *Making it Out* (Under Contract, Utah State University Press).

11 See Corder, “Argument as Emergence” (17; 23); Lorde, “There are no Honest Poems” (409); Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality” (260).



tragedy of being human is forgetting we are self(ves), stories that are not fixed but always subject to change due in part to the initiating of archival impressions—that which acts on one’s archive rhetorically. My experience with TeamLab is what I strive for at the UofU amongst the undergraduate students I work with, which I have written about elsewhere (García and Hinojosa).

### **Coloniality of Instruction-and-Curriculum**

Utahans and Utah stand apart. I say this at the risk of homogenizing culture and reducing *rhetorics of place* to a monolith.<sup>12</sup> In Utah, K-12 education, religion, and group circles are a prism by which to see *coloniality of instruction-and-curriculum*, inseparable from *coloniality of knowledge*--the invisible constitutive side (and not derivative)--and *being*. Especially if by power we in part mean epistemic and aesthetic campaigns to hoard and produce knowledge in excess that feed a war to dominate information (and mediums of circulation) fought on the battlefields of ideas (Man), images (Human), and ends (Rights-to). It was during my first year at the UofU, and from both students’ strong sense of obligation-responsibility to and my own readings of church-settler discourse on *work*,<sup>13</sup> that I encountered the *work* of reestablishing Zion and *instructing* salvation, reeducation, conversion, and restoration (*work-instruction*). This, in addition to my readings of discourse by Spanish Friars-Jesuits, Kant, and Hegel of whom emphasized *instruction, curriculum, and/or pedagogy*,<sup>14</sup> would lead me to *coloniality of instruction-and-curriculum*.<sup>15</sup> In Utah, it unfolds as the *idea* of Mormon/ism<sup>16</sup>, and *land as inheritance*, an *Other-as-Same* relation, and *work-instruction*, all of which produce images of empty landscapes from which the inhabiting bodies of the other vanish or disappear. These are all archival impressions that feed into a much larger modern/colonial and settlerizing archive.

In part, without the classroom of education (broadly conceived) and *coloniality of instruction-and-curriculum*, neither *coloniality* as a disputed logic of domination, management, and control nor the *epistemological regime of modernity* could have been consolidated and sustained so successfully across space-place and time.<sup>17</sup> *Coloniality of instruction-and-curriculum* is the medium in which knowledge becomes factual and the tool by which epistemic obedience is managed and controlled. It is a settler-centered instruction in which educators, like the “men of letters” of the past, are entangled in informing-giving form to coloniality of knowledge. They become complicit in naturalizing a colonial matrix of power and its the modus operandi of modernity/coloniality--“The control of labor and subjectivity, the practices and policies of genocide and enslavement, the pillage of life and land, and the denials and destruction of knowledge, humanity, spirituality, and cosmo-existence” (Mignolo and Walsh 16)--cloaked by images of empty landscapes, narratives

12 . See Endres and Senda-Cook (260).

13 . See García (2022a); García (2022b).

14 . See Dussel, Quijano, and Mignolo for conversations on instruction, curriculum, and pedagogy.

15 . See García, “Personal and Collective Memory.”

16 See Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (151): “The ‘idea’ of America’ is not only a reference to a place,” but that which “makes it possible to transform an invented idea into ‘reality’” (*The Idea* 151).

17 . See A. Gordon (10).

of land waiting to be discovered, owned, and transformed into fertile “resources,” and rhetorics of peaceful Man-Human possessing the masculinity and intelligence to transform land into fertile “resources.” For me, students’ *stories-so-far* that year were examples of what *coloniality of instruction-and-curriculum* has done to and made of them. Because stories are imbued with meaning and consequences insofar that they circulate widely, have structural underpinnings, and carry material consequences (Rohrer 189). Students that year were a testament that stories are political because they “mobilize” histories and geographies of power (Alexander and Mohanty 31). But that too is a *story-so-far*.

Neither Utah nor the students I teach are inherent or essential to themselves. *Coloniality of instruction-and-curriculum* in Utah thus can be approached as a racial matrix that peddles racist worldviews predicated on the pretext of epistemic and ontological difference; law of a formal representation of identification that underwrites a responsibility to, conditional welcoming of, and path/passage towards inviting an *other*; and subtext for coloniality of power. It affords us a window, in other words, into *discourse-about actions* (Benoit 70; 75). *Coloniality of instruction-and-curriculum* plays a role, adjacent to the material forms of public memory and everyday human projects in Utah, in how the past and certain ghosts are kept alive in ways that rewrites Utah in modern/colonial ways. But again, that is but a *story-so-far*. This means that if space-place, language, and identity are made by the same token they can be remade. This experience allowed me to coalesce the interworking’s of *deep rhetoricity*, decolonial work, and feminist coalition-building. And what resulted my first year at the UofU was an archival approach, an effort to create a public record that would afford students the opportunity to view the contents of their archives as *stories-so-far* and initiate decolonizing archival impressions; the unsettling of the settled-ness of Self.

## The Fly in the Elephant’s Nose

My first year at the UofU was marked by racist fliers, not-in-Utahism, determined epistemic ignorance, and Utah niceness-politeness. But to identify students as *problems* is in itself problematic. Corder claims we are all narratives of histories, dogmas, and arguments. Sometimes they crush up against each other (19). So, when students carried out rhetorics of epistemology through church-settler epideictic rhetoric--“they [the *other*] love when we bring them things [the gift]”--during the first week of my “Intermediate Writing” course I choose to see this as an opportunity. If *coloniality of instruction-and-curriculum* has informed how such students walk and see the world and interact and exchange meaning with *others* by the same token both can be the means to unsettle *barriers between us* and bring forth a *future of being-and-thinking-with* each other *otherwise*. Friction, in the vein of Anna Tsing, became part of my vocabulary and pedagogical praxis. It afforded one way to think about what happens when there is an opportunity for non-humans (people, stories, knowledge) to come together and get to work. Things, however, do not always go as planned, and sometimes friction is just resistance.

If the *rhetoric of place* and the everyday are outcomes of literacies, rhetorics, and human projects by the same token they can be the means for a new arrangement. That kind of human work, however, requires a public record, cultural (archives) and individual (self as *stories-so-far*). The racist fliers found on campus were part of it. And so, we began there. A public record can afford students opportunities to utilize hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings as categories of analysis that can point towards connections between the past and the present in terms of social activities. In Utah, those activities can be as small as partaking in a service mission and as large as views on race and sexual orientation shared by the Church. A turning point for me in the ways I teach about settler colonialism and coloniality came by way of an email from a student. They were bothered by their peers and appealed for “more accurate accounts” of Utah history. The student offered to “assist” me in “researching and planning” and therein emerged my archival research of church-settlers of Utah. The student introduced me to the *Book of Mormon* and the General Conference corpus which led me down a rabbit hole and to the *Journal of Discourses* and *The Millennial Star* (and *Ensign*).

Now, students were not inclined to accept conversations about settler colonialism or coloniality much less if they were abstract. So, I turned inward to the haunting(s)-situation(s) I know while I acquainted myself with church-settler history in Utah. In my previous work with students at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley I had done archival research on settler-pioneers of the LRGV (see image below). This activity set in motion my endeavor to be vulnerable and *be-and-think-with* others, unsettling the distance and barriers between us. It animated Avery Gordon’s argument about how [We] are all part of and in this story. My hope was that settler archives would illustrate how ideas “dwell across the ages in the concepts and institutions human beings have built” (L. Gordon 13). Concept and institutions are what allow ideas to *appear* and *become* consequential within and beyond immediate settings and contexts (123). This reflected my effort to stand at the nexus of their *stories-so-far* and *possibilities of new stories*.

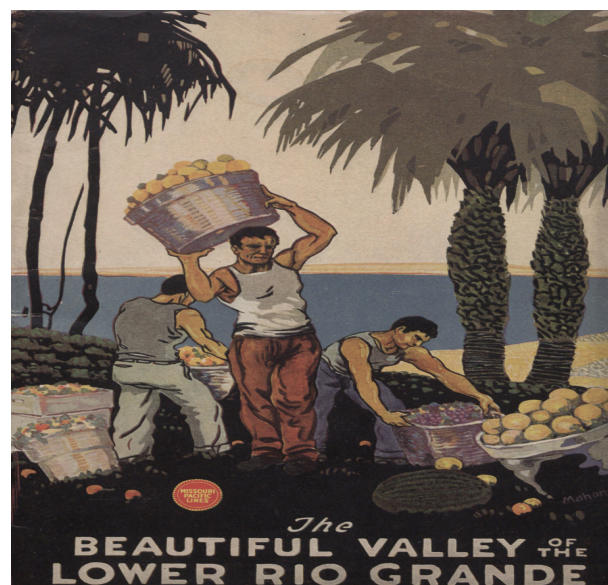


Figure 1

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Students, to my surprise, were receptive, given the friction I encountered early on in the semester. They demonstrated their intellectual capacities to explore, investigate, analyze, interpret, determine, and translate meaning. For example, one student wrote about how settlers had control over mass media production (left image). This stood out to me given the mass management and control over multiple mediums of media in Utah and the way the war of information has influenced how “people dehumanize/other individuals.” Another student documented what they saw: white women, old white angry settlers, and white mayor. This response stood out as well because Utah is notoriously White and the *rhetoric of place* is “the glorification of settlers/colonialism/manifest destiny” (right image). With this settler archive I was able to underscore the effects and consequences of settler colonialism and coloniality on land, memory, knowledge, understanding, feeling, and being.

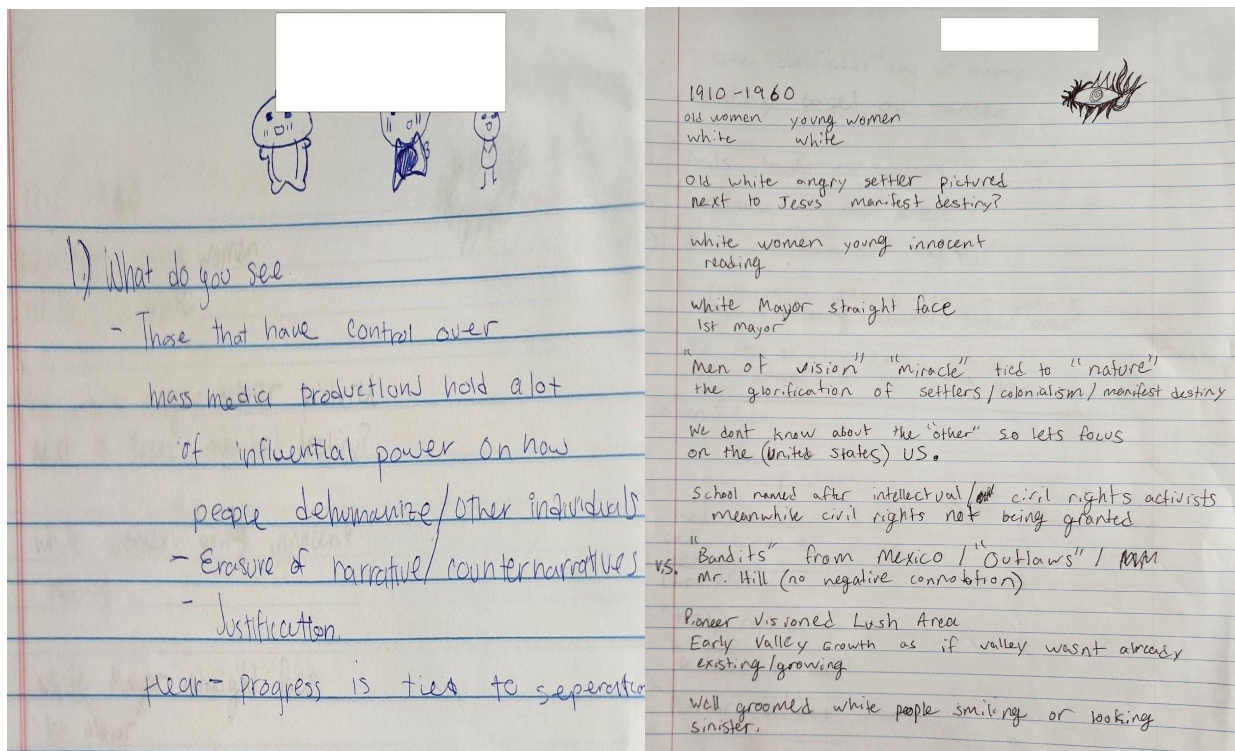


Figure 2 and Figure 3.

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Students were keen on what they encountered in the archives. One took note of key phrases that stood out to them: “rails brought civilization” | “men of integrity” | “destined to lead.” Their observation did not go unnoticed: “Everybody in the picture is white” (left image). I say this because the course was demographically majority white church members with only a couple of exceptions. I wondered, *how did students internalize all this?* Did it even cross their mind? An-



other student comments on the “dangerous aspect of this writing” because it “allows sentiments” about “Mexicans and Native Americans” to “silently embed themselves in society” (right image). The irony of this statement is not lost on me either particularly as it is read alongside the claim, “by only providing one viewpoint...it leads the reader to assume that the correct narrative is that of the author.” Because Utah is a case study in just how that has happened. I wondered here too, if they found irony in how they dismissed the racist fliers discussed at the onset of the semester.

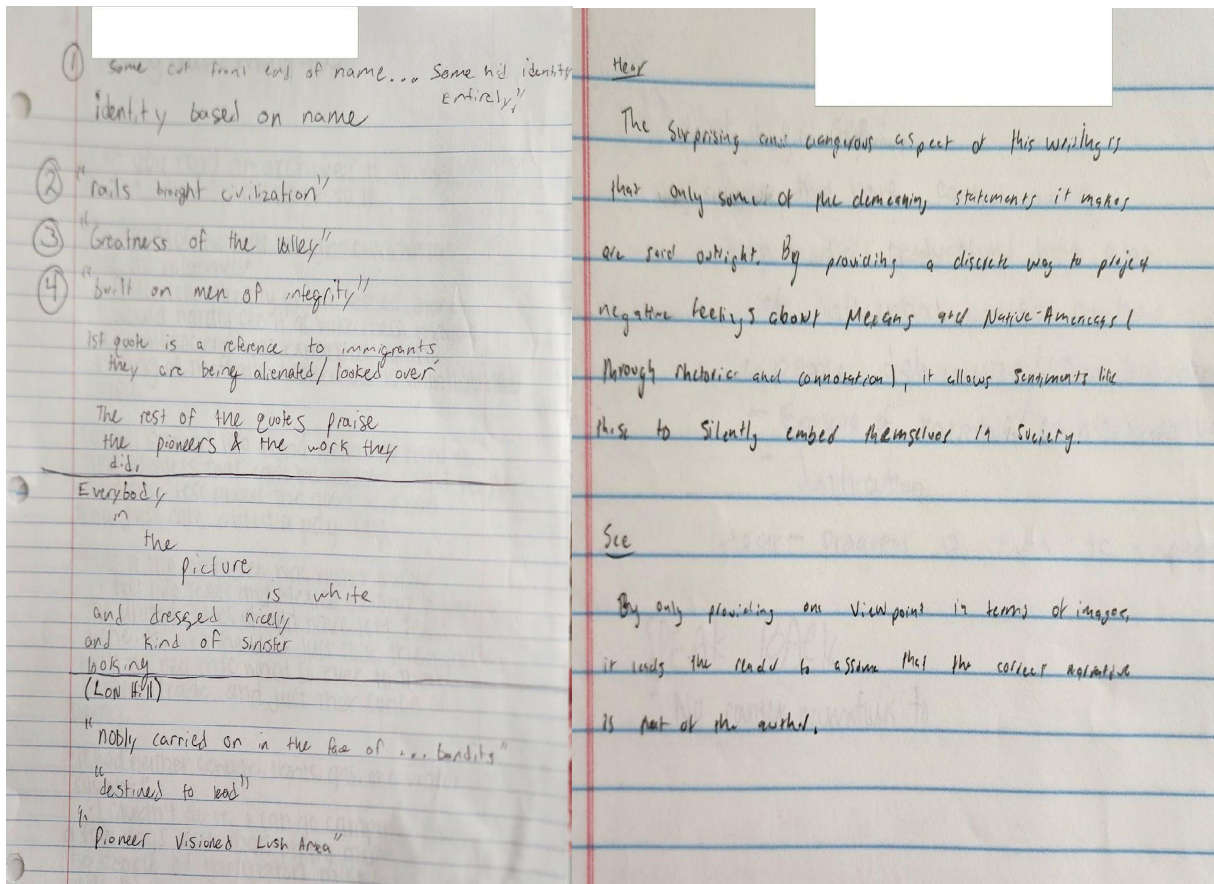


Figure 4 and 5

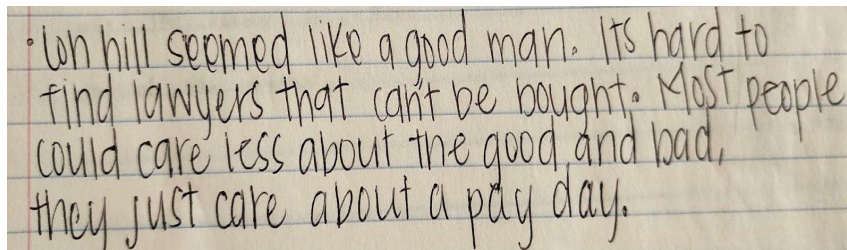
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But this activity reflects the extent of my success that semester. By week three the language of the everyday shifted from Texas/me to Utah/Utahns. The classroom environment changed. We focused on haunting(s)-situation(s) that marked settler arrival, settlement, and expansion in Utah: the various wars between church-settlers and American Indians/Native Americans (Battle at Fort Utah, Battle Creek Massacre, Black Hawk War, Wakara’s War, Tintic War); the multiple treaties (Treaty of Abiquiú of 1849, The Spanish Fork Treaty of 1865, Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868); and *coloniality of instruction-and-curriculum* (Intermountain Indian School, The Indian Placement Program-Lamanite Placement Program, and Relief Society). Friction was at work. But so were many of the students. Because friction cuts both ways. Such friction laid bare the *public secret* of Utah, the *structure of feeling* haunting Utah, and the function of Utahn niceness-polite-



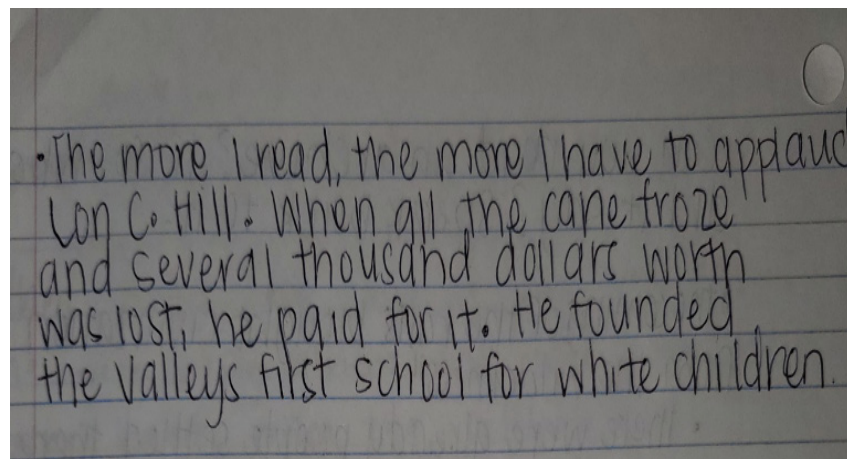
ness (and not-in-Utahism); a faux listening to the *Other-as-Same*.<sup>18</sup>

Corder anticipated moments in which people can be steadfast in convictions. *Coloniality of instruction-and-curriculum* had only ever underscored the structural underpinnings and material consequences of their *stories-so-far*. *Returns* to and *careful reckonings* with how *stories-so-far* and the everyday adhere to, interact with, and carry out the histories, cultural memories, and literacy-rhetorical practices settler archives represent amplify a threat to foundations of self, *stories-so-far*, and community. What happens in such cases? The image below comes from students responding to the Texas settler archives. Notice, the students refer to the settler as a “good man” and applaud the settler for taking risks and establishing a white school for children. Now, this comes off the heels, once more, of discussions on settler colonialism and coloniality. Utahn niceness-politeness, in this context, is the act of listening with no intention to have critique bear on the self while epistemic ignorance is the production of knowledge wielded to create distance-separation and maintain relations of power.



• Lon Hill seemed like a good man. Its hard to find lawyers that cant be bought. Most people could care less about the good and bad, they just care about a pay day.

Figure 6.



• The more I read, the more I have to applaud Lon C. Hill. When all the cane froze and several thousand dollars worth was lost, he paid for it. He founded the valleys first school for white children.

Figure 7.

But I was persistent. We tried the privilege walk and privilege for sale activity. I invited colleagues (Christie Toth and Jon Stone) to attend class. We watched short documentaries. We listened to music. We read the words and ideas of their ancestors. I was still green in the world of teaching. And so, I tried everything. Because I refused to allow church-settler epideictic rhetoric to go unchecked; a wor(l)ding aspiration, which underscores students’ understanding of the ways words and worlding can *take* and *make* space-place. Overall, my goal was to utilize the language

18 . See Dussel on *Other-as-Same* (12; 32; 34-36; 39; 44-45).

of the everyday, attending to the appeal by the student who emailed me, to both illuminate cultural and thinking program/ings and create friction. Hardly anything changed. But I did have four students who were doing *shadow work*; work behind the scenes without any guarantee or certainty for what it might yield (see Arellano et al.). By week 7 of the semester, I decided to scrap the final project and create a new one on the fly. I would call it, “Stories-So-Far and the Possibilities of New Stories.” The title would be inspired by the work of feminists such as Doreen Massey and Judy Rohrer.

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**Stories-So-Far and the Possibilities of New Stories**

Adam Banks claims the DJ is a manifestation of the griot, for which he describes as a storyteller: a *time binder* (“Binding time, linking past, present, and future”), a keeper of history, and a *rhetor extraordinaire* (“able to produce or perform on demand for... whatever the situation demands—celebration, critique, preservation, connection”) who is firmly rooted in African tradition (3; 23). Similarly, the *corridista*, firmly rooted in Mexican and Mexican American tradition, is a time binder, a keeper of history, and a rhetor extraordinaire, intervening in normalized stories (e.g., peaceful settlers). Typically, they announce a place, states the problem, reveals a haunting, and call forth a politics (of seeing, being, feeling, and doing) at the nexus of stories-so-far and the possibilities of new stories.

Over the course of the semester, we will return to church-settler words, ideas, arguments, and projects of territorial and epistemological expropriation through music (church hymns), readings (General Conference), and settler archives (Journal of Discourse). We will return to the rhetoric of place—the grid system, Temple Square. This is the Place Heritage park—and its effects and consequences on land, memory, knowledge, understanding, and being. For this semester project, you will enact the ethics, ethos, and praxis of the griot and/or *corridista*: announcing a place and space, stating a problem, revealing a haunting, and calling forth a politics at the nexus of stories-so-far and the possibilities of new stories.

You will do so by developing a multi-media portfolio that demonstrates:

- A return home. Frantz Fanon refers to home as a place and feeling. Per our readings, it is important to return to the space and place where one does and thinks. Memories “call.” Victor Villanueva tells us (19). So, return to your memories and sets of stories. “We are,” Judy Rohrer writes, “the set of stories we tell ourselves, the stories that tell us, the stories other tell about us” (189). We take in these sets of stories through community listening (a set of enunciations and material exchanges). They will have informed how we walk and see the world and interact and exchange meaning with others.
  - You will return to and carefully reckon with your sets of stories-so-far. You will locate spaces and places familiar to you, identify specific sets of stories, name the ways you inherit, embody, experience, and practice these stories, and reflect on how these stories both live vibrantly in and around you and settled you.
- A return to a haunted/ing story inherited or passed down about church-settlers. “Stories,” M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty tell us, are “simultaneously ‘maps’ in that they mobilize both histories and geographies of power” (31). Stories, Rohrer remind us, “involve power that has structural

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underpinnings and material consequences” (189). Societies’ story, Derrida will argue, is a “collection or series” of hauntings and ghosts” (172). They are, as Avery Gordon claims, part of “our social world” and are a “shared structure of feeling” (27, 201). Society is haunted.

- You will interview a friend, family member, or community member that you have either heard from or share a common haunted/ing story with.
- You will document (images) the ways the haunted/ing story circulates in spaces and places familiar to you.
- You will carefully reckon with this haunted/ing story and the spaces and places it circulates by conducting research on it. In the ethic, ethos, and praxis of the griot and/or *corridista*, you will work to unsettle the settled and haunted back the haunted/ing story.
- A return to the ways hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings afford an-other set of choices, options, and responsibilities. Gordon tells us, “we are [haunted by these stories] ...even if we do not want to be,” and it is our responsibility to “recognize just where we are in this story” (22, 51, 188, 190). We are invited to develop an-other fundamental epistemology for living” (151). Derrida will refer to this as a “politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations” (xviii). A learning how to live otherwise. Stories are not fixed but rather always already subject to change. They are subject to change, because as Doreen Massey claims, they are always in the process of being made (9, 12). In this way, we are “the possibilities of new stories” too (Rohrer 189). But to work towards such ends demands returns, careful reckonings, and enduring task in and around hauntings and ghosts.
  - You will return to your stories-so-far that live vibrantly in and around you and record a careful reckoning with the ways hauntings, inheritances, and dwelling have settled you.
  - You will record a careful reckoning, first, that speaks to the ways hauntings, inheritances, and dwelling have settled you, and second, that speaks to a commitment to unsettle the settled and work towards the possibilities of new stories.

Figure 8 and Figure 9.

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The assignment description is rather long and imperfect but overall the goal for the final project was to create an opportunity for students to gather their ancestral *stories-so-far* and collect evidence to support the verisimilitude of them —demystifying and extending archival research to the *elsewhere* and *otherwise*. The inevitable friction would hopefully aid them in considering *an-other* set of choices, options, and obligations-responsibilities. The assignment builds on the ideas of griots, *corridistas*, and elders as *keepers of history and knowledge, time benders, and canon makers* entrusted with being the affective channels of rhetorical transmission of and for a politics of hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings. They operate under a simple premise that people can listen to know-learn complex issues if the intention is truly for them to understand. It is a portfolio assignment constituted thus by *returns home, careful reckonings with stories-so-far, and*

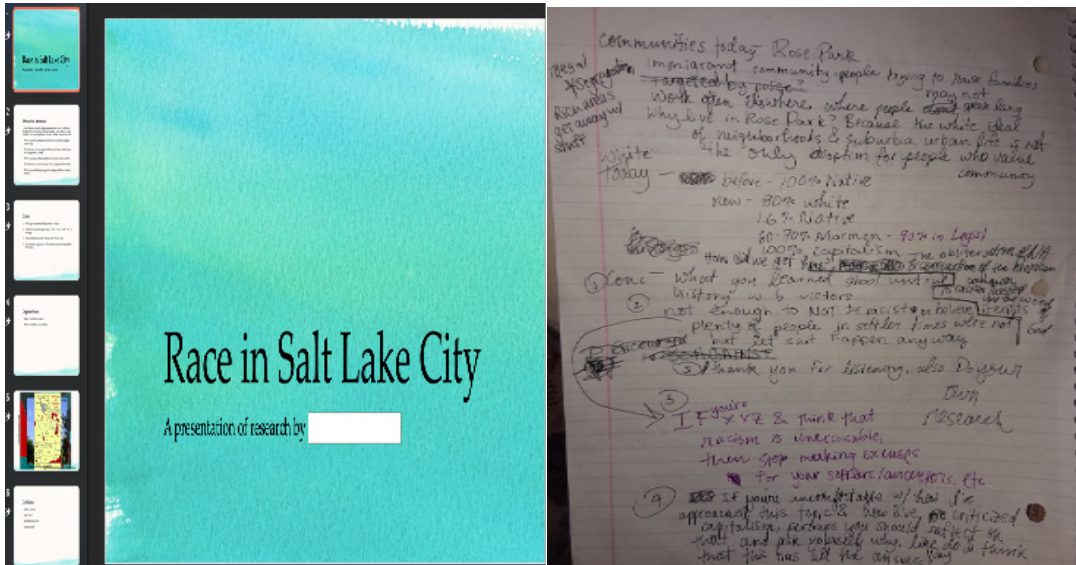


Figure 10. and Figure 11.

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It is our hope, as educators, that when we offer *an-other* set of choices, options, and responsibilities students will pick it up, hold onto it, learn from it, and even pass it along. Sometimes, however, the work of our work will only be felt after the fact. So, perhaps, a reconceptualization of failure is in order, because the students I taught that semester will never be able to truly claim they never knew—an archival impression.. And that for me is the power of *being-and-thinking-with*. Stories from faculty of color advancing the projects of unsettling and a decolonial option at PWIs are few and far between in WRS. So, I wanted to share a story of tension, frictions, adjustments, and failures from within the classroom.

Still, I believe feminist activist and coalitional work can benefit from *deep rhetoricity*. Fanon to Mahmood warned about the predicament of contaminating life questions and questions of agency with reductive, dichotomous, and oppositional rhetorical structures. There is almost a sense of simplicity that underscores the aims to unsettle the settled-ness of systems of hierarchy, patriarchy, and other forms of oppression-repression. But at the moment life and agency get reduced to binaries (black/white; good/bad; right/wrong) and options (confront; resist; re-signify hegemonic norms) that human work-project becomes unsuitable for anyone, even if resistance is what is happening. Because it presupposes the proper grounds and name for knowledge, understanding, and being; speaking the proper words and identifying a proper way, reproducing a story of the [I] and the [You] instead of the [We/arth]. Feminist activist and coalitional work still have some *unsettling of the settled* to do, and *deep rhetoricity* can aid in such endeavors.

Feminist coalitional work can benefit from *deep rhetoricity* insofar that it thrives in the complexities, complicatedness, and messiness that comes with friction. In fact, the epistemic principle of *enduring tasks* underscores the anticipation of that. For me, the wor(l)ding of a future of the



[We/arth] complements Fanon's vision for a building of the world of the [You]. [We/arth] unsettles the barriers between us and that future by embracing how [W]e all need to give an [E]ar to what lives in our bones [/] and both re-introduce (co/re)-invention as [A]rt and be *receptively generous* to each other and the [Earth]<sup>19</sup> And yet, it nuances the [You]. First of all, wor(l)ding is what we do in WRS, because wording is human work and worlding is a human project. [We/arth], second of all, unsettles the settled-ness of proper words and identifying a proper way. It holds that rhetoric matters because it demands an engagement not just with human beings but with everything that surrounds us—[Earth]. To have [We/arth] in common is to value the possibility for commonality and radically reframe the worth (intentional homonym) of a gift in the *non-name* of all and for the sake of all Matter living-on [sur-vie] and flourishing otherwise.

## Feminist Activist and Coalitional Work

In this section, we, the coauthors of this essay, reflect on what feminist activist and coalitional work means to us and what it can look like. Our reflections do not attempt to settle on [A] definition of feminist coalition-building but rather underscore the importance of *thinking-and-being-with others* (inheritances, dwellings, ghosts, people, non-humans) *otherwise*. Our reflections below highlight feminist Ribero and Arellano's concept of *comadrisimo* at best and at the very least our aspirations for the wor(l)ding *otherwise*.

**Gesa:** The feminist activist principles we describe in the introductory section of this essay have become integral to all courses I plan, design, teach, revise, or re-envision. For example, in the course discussed here, Writing the Archives, I center the readings, assignments, research methods, and research projects in feminist pedagogical principles. Although the class did not have an explicitly feminist theme, feminist activist principles inform my course design and presentation, including readings selected, questions raised about research methods, emphasis on reciprocity, respect, collaboration, and dignified relations with participants, as well as discussions of differences between stories-so-far and the possibilities of new stories. Moreover, my goal is to invite students to make meaningful contributions to new or existing archives; to consult, collaborate, and build coalitions with community members whose stories and lived experiences became the subject of their inquiry; and to contribute to conference panels or scholarly publications (such as this article).

**Valeria:** Coalition-building means and manifests itself through many different ways in my life. I am the start of a new generation in my family, I was the firstborn of the fourth living generation. Every time I go home it is essential to me to come to where my family started. I ask to be taught about the struggle, the sacrifice, and all the work done. I constantly visit the house where my grandmother was born. That's where everything started. To me, it is the house that reminds me of why I need to keep going. Feminist activist and coalition work to me is paving a path for all the women in the world who are underrepresented and come from similar backgrounds as me.

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<sup>19</sup> Upon a Google search, and finding the project Wearth, I decided to align my acronym with theirs as it underscores my aim with [We/arth] (<https://www.earth.eu/>).

We are incredibly hidden in important professional sectors such as the finance field. I emphasize this because the journey I am currently on has not been easy. Coalition-building to me is sitting down and listening to the several two-hour interviews I worked with and making sure every experience was documented correctly on the UofL's Oral History Center website because I know what it is like to have your story be told incorrectly by others. Voices are important, and making sure experiences are transmitted correctly is even more essential to advocacy, inclusion, and trust. Coalition-building is the reason why the organization Pathways to Citizenship, a 501(c)3, is now a priority in my life. Pathways to Citizenship's mission is to help undocumented individuals navigate the complicated legal and cultural pathway to citizenship in the United States. It is essential to give back to my community and contribute to the success of the Latinx community in the United States as well as in Latin America. Every year, I distribute educational resources, food and clothes to my community in Pereira, Colombia. It is important for me to take the time to invest in others who were born into my same struggles. My success is measured through how many lives I impact, not how much profit I can make. Coalition-building to me means I do not win unless the people around me do too.

**Nicole:** What feminist coalition-building means to me is to be able to build not only strong but also meaningful connections with the people and communities I am working with which in my case were the Sisters. Feminist activist and coalition-building work means you're able to find common ground and help each other in a mutual way, although sometimes you may be working with diverse communities and/or people. This was how it was with me while working with the Sisters that although a community themselves, as individuals they were extremely diverse and complex in the best of ways. I was able to learn from the Sisters while also being able to help them add to their digital archives. It was a mutual exchange and was a building of feminist coalition from both ends. To have successful feminist activist and coalitional work I wanted to represent and advocate for the Sisters. While carrying out my work this meant being able to make sure not to speak for but on behalf of the Sisters, what they shared with me was their truth and stories that I was granted access to share with others; the Sisters held the power in their voices and what I shared. I wanted others to see the more intimate side of the Sisters they don't always get to share, and what made this feminist coalition-building really special for me is that because the Sisters are so diverse, they advocated for many other communities along with the feminist community which meant we were able to do some coalition-building for those communities as well. I always wanted to make sure that everything I did with the Sisters was done with dignity and respect.

Within my project feminist coalition-building looked like working continuously with the Sisters and constantly asking them for their feedback. With everything I did I worked closely alongside Professor Caldwell who gave me honest and very useful feedback. As a Professor and Sister themselves, their feedback meant a lot to me as they saw both perspectives and were the blend within the two parties involved. While interviewing the Sisters I made sure to not only ask my own questions but also give them the opportunity to share what they wanted to say and allow them



to have liberty within the project so it wouldn't be just a script. The coalition-building did not only come off from my end but it was a collective effort to do what was best for all involved; most importantly, the Sisters and their individual stories were the center of it all.

**Romeo:** At the heart of feminist rhetorical practices is an ethic, ethos, and praxis of unsettling the settled-ness of societal, cultural, and/or communal mechanisms of oppression, repression, exclusion, and erasure. Several examples in English and Writing and Rhetorical Studies come to mind that speak to coalition-building and efforts to undertake the [R] project (rescue, recover, recognize, reinscribe, and represent) in order to restore women to rhetorical history and rhetorical history to women: *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics* (edited by Buchanan and Ryan), *Rhetorica in Motion* (edited by Schell and Rawson), *Available Means* (edited by Ritchie and Ronadl), and *Feminist Rhetorical Practices* (Kirsch and Royster) among others. I think Ribero and Arellano capture the connecting threads across these projects when they advocate for comadris-mo. If coalition-building is going to mean anything it must include networks of care, mindsets of no te dejes, relations of trust, reciprocal empathy, and most of all love. I think of my Grandma and her comadres in this case, who exhibited for me an awaiting (“ojalá”): a hope without guaranteed predicate, a hope for that which may or may not arrive.<sup>20</sup>

Grandma and her comadres were more than ready to carry out work for an-other (me) without ever any certainty or guarantee for what it might yield. Not only does this speak to the ethic of paying it forward but also underscores the ethos and praxis of (rhetorical) poder y fuerza. Royster might refer to this as *rhetorical prowess*, but a more appropriate phrase might be a no te dejes mentality. It is best captured by the words of my Grandma, “¡No dejaremos (terconess) que cualquier cosa o persona nos trate comoquiera. Porque si lo dejas, ya valio!” That is the personification of poder y fuerza, which is not predicated on pre-commitments to idioms of resistance, subversion, and re-signification of hegemonic norms but rather reflective of the complexities of reality and to political realities; we *do* despite hauntings and in spite of gaining meaning from haunting situations. In other words, haunting(s)-situation(s) enable and create our capacity for action. I am not sure if the comadres I know would refer to themselves as feminist but that is not the point. Here, the point is the ethic, ethos, and praxis of coalition-building that strives to engage in a wor(l)ding of futures *otherwise*. And that is work worth undertaking. That is the work I hope can live-on [sur-vie] and flourish beyond our immediate settings and contexts.

## Concluding Thoughts, Visions for a Future, Otherwise

Our goal in this essay is to open up a conversation on the outward facing aspect of *deep rhetoricity* and advance a relational framework of *being-and-thinking-with* others *otherwise*. The epistemic principles of a *return* situates us squarely on ways of walking and seeing the world;

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20 . See García and José Cortez (105).

*careful reckonings* is a coming to terms with understandings of *being-and-thinking-with* others and reciprocity; and *being-and-thinking-with* is a commitment of unsettling the barriers between us and a future of mutual wor(l)ding. Our discussions strive to animate these outwards epistemic principles of *deep rhetoricity* amid troubling times and pedagogical challenges. In all sincerity, we have no remedy, nor do we offer a how-to guide to do this work. Yet, we believe that the concept we lay out and the outward principles we have tentatively sketched out amplify the demand to learn how to *be-and-think-with* each other *otherwise*.

As the examples from García's and Kirsch courses illustrate, instructors always already stand at the nexus of *stories-so-far* and the *possibilities of new stories*. As García illustrates, this is an *enduring task*, a call for an intervention, when we become too comfortable in the settledness of our assumptions and our communities. We must continually ask, *where are the lessons of ethos and praxis being proposed from?* To *be-and-think-with* another, at least as conceived in this essay, is to engage in friction: an opportunity for non-humans (people, stories, knowledge) to come together and get to work. At times, to channel Corder, it will feel like we as educators are plunging on alone and that we might have to continue to do so as friction becomes resistance. In those instances, the barriers between us and a future of mutual wor(l)ding becomes muddy. But unlike the scenarios Corder plays out in his essay, educators do not have the luxury to walk away. In such instances, all we can do then is be the fly in the elephant's nose. That too is a form of unsettling the barriers between us and a future,

As Kirsch's students so eloquently narrate, the *enduring task* is one of making ongoing commitments to relearn to be with ourselves, others, and communities otherwise, a call for invention and co-invention. As Salazar's and Guevara Fernandez's research projects illustrate, taking seriously questions of ethos and praxis—reflecting on our own commitments—and of reciprocity—how we might engage with and contribute to those whose lives we study and document—will lead us to co-create spaces/ places that allow for *possibilities of new stories*, for creating coalitions of solidarity, and for committing ourselves and our work to bold visions of the future. If the research, ethos, and commitments of up-and-coming scholars like Guevara Fernandez and Salazar is any indication, we are well on our way to overcoming the barriers that might stand between Us and that Future.

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# Stories-so-far and Possibilities of New Stories

## Creating Coalitions of Solidarity via Testimonios

Throughout my Advanced Communication Skills writing course, I (Valeria) have discovered my connection and relationship with oral stories from the nostalgia I felt while browsing through different digital archives. Most of my family history, tradition, and experiences have been passed down through words, not writing. I have treasured each statement that has been shared by my great-grandparents, grandparents, and mother more than any history text presented to me in school. During the course, we read and listened to many different types of people who had a story and perspective to share. I related because I know how difficult it is to preserve every sentence, every word, every syllable.

I wanted my project not only to be focused on the voices of a silent community but about the possibilities for intervention and genuine change that extend beyond the boundaries of academia. If we are truly listening to the voices in this archive, we are thinking about how we may plan and strive toward alternative futures that are more equitable and just than the world in which we presently live in (Reyes and Curry Rodríguez). I know the power I hold as an individual with the responsibility of passing them down to those who come after me. Those who must continue to bring these stories to life or else they never existed. I wanted to be able to expand the attainability and understanding of the five testimonios I found so that future archivists won't scroll past them due to the lack of details or language barrier keeping them from exploring the perspectives of others.

Although I do not attend the UofL and am not part of the community, I do plan to continue working with the rest of the testimonios. I will propose to Heather Fox an internship to work closer with the collection and Latinx community leaders for a larger contribution to the oral history project they initiated. An impact I intend to make is for the Oral History Center to have a more conscious understanding of the oral testimonios they are preserving and how important they are to the Latinx community that exists in this country, not just in Louisville. I knew I wanted to base my final project on my community. I wanted to highlight the voices of a community that continues to remain silent in this country. I wanted to do my part with the responsibility of sharing stories that are not as easily preserved as documents.

## The Project of Returns

Throughout my research, I continually emphasize that the sound recordings I worked with are more than oral history—they are testimonios from the Latinx community of Louisville, Kentucky. They are full of struggles and experiences that set side by side the Latinx identity and the American Dream. Testimonios reflect a narrative research approach based on Latin American

history, against the backdrop of socioeconomic injustice that has afflicted the area since 1950 (Reyes and Curry Rodríguez). As Cindy Cruz explains, “testimonio [in the United States] is an expression of the dispossessed, the migrant, and the queer, is a response to larger discourses of nation-building that often erase and make invisible the expandable and often disposable labor and experiences of immigrants, the working class, African Americans, and others” (p. 460). The Latina Feminist Group explains in their book *Telling to Live* that “from our different personal, political, ethnic, and academic trajectories, we arrived at the importance of testimonio as a crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure” (Torrez 2015). Testimonio allows researchers to bring awareness, offer opportunities to reflect critically, and examine the connection between lived experience and systems of oppression (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona).

Testimonio is a methodological approach for study and a pedagogical resource for teaching in the disciplines of Chicana/Latina and Educational Studies. According to qualitative researchers motivated by testimonies, storytelling—particularly counter storytelling—can assist to shift unfavorable mainstream opinions of racially minoritized groups. This has resulted in academic collective forms, such as the Chicana Feminist group, who see testimonio as shaping “a narrative format as redemption—as takers of the stories, readers of the narratives, and creators of the analysis” (Reyes and Curry Rodríguez). This qualitative technique demonstrates that racially minoritized persons can and do create meaningful forms of knowledge and provide opportunities for students and professors of color to speak and document their own stories, therefore altering the epistemological ways of social science research (Mangual Figueroa and Barrales). This is illustrated, for instance, in Romeo García’s reflection of his sense of /lack of belonging in the academy:

As I think about the academic spaces I now occupy, I ponder what it would mean to re-center listening through storytelling and memory beyond the stories white folks tell in the academy. Community listening invites us to create presence from absence and sound from silence. How then might we embrace this, within a discipline that is overdetermined by a history that is both colonial and hierarchal, in ways that allow us to listen to, provide room for, and speak and haunt back with the heterogeneity of specters? How might we enact community listening, within a field that will re-write itself as colonial, both to be answerable to (to respond and answer to) a call to responsibility, however ungraspable it might be, and a setting-to-work? (Garcia, “Creating Presence from Absence”)

No single definition of testimonio can contain the numerous and multiple uses of the term. However, it is possible to say that one of its central aspects is being a narrative of denunciation that implies an urgency to narrate. In addition, testimonio entails an intertextual narrative, since it always supposes a different version of the same event. Although testimonio is not just a specialty of women, women have offered some of the most powerful voices in testimonio, speaking out forcefully against injustices experienced by their communities. This, maybe more than anything

else, emphasizes how testimonio differs from traditional oral history/life history interviews, as well as genres such as autobiography, which are generally organized through the individual's linear progressive development. Testimonio refuses differences between the individual speaking and the collective from which they speak and is generally motivated by the immediate action-inspiring power of storytelling rather than peaceful or historically-'informative' objectives in and of themselves.

## Careful Reckonings and the Project of Being-with Others Otherwise

Testimonios remain an essential component of the Latinx community's attempts to question prevailing narratives and campaign for social justice today. Testimonios have allowed older generations to transmit their life experiences and social struggles to younger generations for them to learn more about their history and continue the fight. This is difficult to do with the current broad descriptions and lack of attention dedicated to the "Latin American-United States" category in the UofL Oral History Center. Providing greater access to these oral testimonios contributes to research on Latin American diaspora through different time periods and journeys. It also contributes to the possibilities of new stories, new perspectives, and new voices within our communities throughout the country. Latinx individuals can reclaim and share their own stories through testimonios, encouraging a deeper knowledge of their experiences and driving greater social change, specifically in the community of Louisville.

I (Valeria) immigrated to the United States from Colombia at the age of 8. I have been in this country for 11 years now, but I have never abandoned my roots and culture no matter how hard this country tries to erase them. This has not been an easy thing to do. Leaving your country, your people, and your environment results in an emptiness that I know many of us have felt. Coming to the United States to pursue a better life and opportunity has meant digesting a completely different culture and community—one that has not always accepted us. Therefore, I have decided that each event, experience, and emotion in each testimony must be written down. Though this meant I had to work harder and for a longer period, it would be contradictory for me to pick and choose what part of each journey is valid or important. Though I connected with each person through similar concepts and circumstances, each of our stories is unique and significant.

There was Mari Mujica, a research anthropologist at the time of the interview (2017). She left Peru with her husband as newlyweds over 30 years ago. Their first stop in the United States was Iowa, then they were in Massachusetts for 15 years and ended up in Louisville because her husband took a job with the University of Louisville. There was a point in her life where she ended up going to Peru with her son and doing research there, staying with her mother. While she was away, she was apart from her husband for months at a time so she could complete her PhD. But then she decided to not continue her research in Peru because she wanted to do research where she lived; so that instead of just researching people, she was collaborating at some lev-

el. When job opportunities opened in Louisville, it was a great opportunity for her family to move. They lived in Louisville for 9 years and then moved to a farm in Shelbyville. In this interview, Mari discusses how her family came to Louisville, the story of why she came to the United States, how her family felt about just her and her new husband leaving Peru, how they felt about her decision of moving countries for a job, the disconnection and privilege that comes with her journey, her family life and influences, and growing up financially stable in Peru. Her interview cuts off as she's discussing her childhood experiences and mentions a nanny who is referred to as "mama".

Sarah Nuñez was born in Bogota, Colombia in 1978. Her father is Colombian and her mother is from Florida. They met in North Carolina in the late 1960's. Sarah was born in Bogota because in 1977, her parents moved to Colombia to take care of her dad's father while he was sick. She did not grow up with much Colombian culture since she was only there during the very early parts of her life. Spanish was rarely spoken in her house since her dad would only use it to speak to family back home. Sarah grew up searching for a part of herself that was missing and found that piece when she went back to Colombia. At the time of the interview, she was working with the University of Louisville Cultural Center through projects such as the Latino Education Outreach. In this interview, she explains how her father came to the United States, her community as a child, her school environment and peers, her career process and obstacles, opportunities and struggles based on her race/ethnicity/gender, the influence of her past work on what she does today, how Donald Trump was affecting the community at the time of elections, and how she self-identifies with Latino culture as an adult.

Dr. Braulio Mesa was an ESL instructor at the time of the interview (2018) who was born in Santiago de Cuba in 1961. After finishing high school in Cuba in 1979, he was offered a scholarship to study in Russia. He was in Russia from 1980 to 1985 where he got a bachelor's degree in physics and Math and also a degree in Russian language. After completion, he returned to Cuba where he worked as a math and astronomy teacher in a high school. In 1998, he won the Visa Lottery for Cuba which allowed him, his wife, and three kids to move to the United States. He picked Louisville, Kentucky because after doing research on other states, he decided it was the best fit in terms of weather and job opportunities. His family had been living in Louisville for approximately 20 years at the time of the interview (2018). In his time in Louisville, he had worked three jobs—the first two in factories and then as an ESL teacher. In this interview, Professor Mesa discusses his upbringing and educational career, his memories of Cuba, Cuba's political unrest and issues, the people who raised him, his heritage, his journey and how it led him to Louisville, the differences between education in Cuba, Russia, and the United States, the progress and future of ESL programs within education systems, and his experience and growth regarding the English language.



## Reflection on the Project of Being with Others Otherwise.

Every word, emotion and experience matters. My relationship with the Latino immigrant community is personal and intimate to my identity. Throughout my educational career, I've never seen any investment or efforts to make me feel seen through interdisciplinary spaces. Not even when we're the second-largest ethnic group in the country. Not even at a college that preaches global citizenship. Not even in spaces where I'm a minority. My commitment to this project is to ensure that each testimony is acknowledged and appreciated by the UofL Oral History Center and any audience that could potentially use their experiences for research or comfort. These testimonies provide more than a story—they provide insight and unrecognized points of view that should be taken into consideration within a country populated by people from all over the world. As a Colombian immigrant myself, I often feel my Latinx identity disappearing in the country I have been forced to assimilate into because of systematic racism, especially now that I'm in higher education. Accessing this archive has allowed me to feel unity and reflect on my community. I feel less alone and more empowered knowing that more journeys exist. I know that I'm not the only immigrant in this country, but it can get so lonely climbing up the systematic ladder. There's so much emotion and peace that comes with hearing others' emotions and struggles that you can relate to.

Testimonios are sacred coming from any person due to them challenging the narratives that have only been told by the oppressors. I want to thank Mari Mujica for emphasizing the distance from our loved ones and the hard reality that comes with living our lives in this country as our families live theirs in another. I want to thank Sarah Nuñez who was born and then separated from the country I am also from. It was so comforting to hear her experience and identity formation when she visited my beautiful country. [I am so happy you found the part that was missing in our land]. I want to thank Braulio Mesa for dedicating so much of his life to education and working so hard to help the ESL community progress. I was once an ESL student and would've given the world to have a teacher who motivated me and encouraged me as much as he does.

We are all one. Immigration is a concept that usually has a negative connotation, but to me it is so beautiful. I am so thankful and proud to be an immigrant. I've seen and felt so much. The experience of leaving your community for a better life at the expense of not fitting into another is terrifying. I am thankful for the Latinx diaspora that exists today. I am thankful that we are all connected one way or the other. Que poderoso es representar todos los hermosos paises de Latino America de nuestra propia manera.

# Stories-so-far and Possibilities of New Stories

## Creating Coalitions of Solidarity via Fashion Choices

### The Project of Returns

I (Nicole) am a 19-year-old 2nd year student at Soka University. I am of Mexican-American descent raised in La Puente, California by my single mother living only four hours away from her hometown in Baja California, Mexico. Throughout my life I've understood that I have an immense passion for playing soccer, fashion/clothing, and music; all which I have absorbed from my immediate family members including my grandparents and mom. After learning of the connections and roots my family carried through a pair of Levi's, I found not only a new appreciation for jeans, but for clothing entirely. Being away from home for college proved to be difficult as I felt a lack of physical and emotional connection to my family. However, the Levi's allowed me to feel reconnected to my family and reminded me that their presence surrounds me in spirit through my identity and through clothing. I already had an interest in fashion, but it never extended beyond my own fashion choices. Just like the archival adventure allowed me to explore unspoken truths that lived within clothing in my family, I discovered the power of storytelling based on the value of whose history is shared, by whom, and how much is left unsaid.

- My mother shared that she wore the Levi's to her classes at Cal State LA the year before she found out she was expecting me. She mentioned that she loved the jeans because extreme low-rise jeans were very in-trend at that time.
- My grandmother told me that she remembered wearing the Levi's while picking my mom and aunt's from school and when going grocery shopping. My grandma said she saved a lot of money for a while to buy them so she tried to wear them as much as possible.

My archival adventure with clothing in my family sparked my curiosity to discover unspoken truths for other minorities and communities outside of the ones I partake in and furthered my understanding of how clothing can power the voices within these communities. Along with this, I had determined the value of self-expression for clothing in my life but wanted to learn more about what that meant for other individuals and communities who are different from me. This encouraged me to return to the idea of conformity in terms of clothing and what is deemed socially acceptable. I've inherited ideas and concepts through clothing from my family but how do these differ or compare to those of other communities who have been raised/live in completely different environments than my own?

## Careful Reckonings

After wrapping up our archival adventure, Gesa gave us two assignments to further our archival understanding: our Archival Research Proposal and Archival Research Project assignments. These assignments allowed me to pursue my interest in fashion, unspoken truths/history, and archives via the Los Angeles Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, who are “an order of 21st Century Nuns dedicated to the promulgation of universal joy and the expiation of stigmatic guilt” (About the Sisterhood). And while the Sisters are no strangers to all sorts of attention—good and bad—the Sisters recently were headlining news articles due to being invited, uninvited, and later reinvited by the Los Angeles Dodgers professional baseball team to receive the Community Hero Award for their efforts in advocating for marginalized groups within the Los Angeles community. The Sister’s were originally uninvited and had their award revoked due to backlash from conservative Catholic groups who claim the Sisters “make fun” of Catholicism and disrespect Nuns by “mocking” their attire (Netburn). The Sisters later received an apology from the Dodgers and were reinvited to accept their award. While many others would have refused or be hesitant to forgive the Dodgers for their behavior, the Sister’s took it in stride, following the goals of their mission of extending compassion, understanding, and kindness to others [the Dodgers Organization and those opposed to their attendance] (Netburn).

I first learned about the Sisters and their mission through a professor at my University who is also a Sister and was a guest lecturer for my class. In the lecture they shared their knowledge about the Sisters, the archives that are a work-in-progress, and the work needed to uncover and explore artifacts within their digital archives. After the presentation, I became interested in learning more about the Sisters and chose to make them the focus of my research proposal and project. The Sisters felt like the perfect community to focus on my because they are a widely spread community who have immensely diverse members who vary in cultural, religious, sexual-orientation, age, gender-identity, gender-expression, and racial backgrounds. Yet, they use clothing collectively to self-express both who they are as unique individuals and how they come together cohesively to promote the same mission. I related to this as my grandmother, mother, and myself hold and shared stories about the Levi’s. Just like those Levi’s, the Sisters’ carefully curated outfits hold and share stories beyond what they verbally share.

The clothing worn by the Sisters and my prior family members touches on unsettling barriers; the Sisters nonverbally challenge gender-norms and stereotypes in clothing along with what society views as acceptable in public appearances in terms of how much attention we bring to ourselves. While talking to my grandma, I learned that she was breaking /unsettling barriers as she shared the challenges and the long amount of time it took her to be able to save up and afford the Levi’s. She had to prioritize paying the bills and taking care of her daughter’s needs before being able to purchase something she strongly desired; I myself wouldn’t need to save for ages to purchase Levi’s nor would I have to put others’ needs before mine to purchase them. I live an entirely

different life than my grandma did at my age as I am not a 19-year-old mother nor do I live in Mexico; her desire to cross the border changed the destiny of my life entirely. The Sisters' clothing, like the Levi's, are a way to bring the past into the present and break barriers of time. Unspoken truths and histories are present in what we decide to wear and sometimes even why we like certain fabrics, colors, prints, designs, and textiles over others.

My research proposal set me up to work with the Sisters, and I had the amazing opportunity to interview two Sisters who are still active within their community today. I walked into these interviews with questions I planned on asking the Sisters along with an image of an outfit they wore that we'd be focusing on (see pictures below).



Figure 12.



Figure 13.

I interviewed both Sisters individually asking them questions on their hats (Hoobie's), makeup, and outfits. The questions dove deep into what impacted their decision for making their appearance along with tying in their personality and life stories into how that has influenced their journey as individuals and Sisters using their clothing and overall appearance to self-express themselves.

After interviewing each of the Sisters I came to an overall conclusion:

“Although I tried to compare the answers given to me... by each Sister, it is unrealistic to do so as they each have their own identities and therefore their own self-expression and messages they are trying to convey. Each interview gave me more insights and highlighted the individuality of each Sister at the same time as they all collectively work as a whole. Although they had some complex and detailed reasons for how they self-expressed through clothing, their clothing choices also had more simple reasons such as adjusting to the weather or wearing a favorite color. The Sisters use the identities that they portray in their clothing to share their self-expression which can fluctuate and vary for different events and times in their lives.”

## Reflecting on the Project of Being-With Others Otherwise

The interviews and reflections I had afterwards allowed me to understand not only the immense diversity in the Sister’s community but also the diversity in the power and reasoning for self-expression in clothing for each person. No two people and their fashion sense are the same so neither will their ability and goal for self-expression be the same. Even when not intentionally trying to self-express through clothing, that alone sends its own message. It was powerful to see how clothing connects us across many differing minorities and communities; although we are still so diverse, we can have one big part of our identities in common. This allowed me to realize:

“I felt a connection to my research project through the talk around clothing as a way to self-express. Although I don’t identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ or queer community, I align with the Sisters in finding significance of self-expression through clothing. My style is very important to me, and everyday I make sure I put on an outfit I feel aligns with my personality. Through my clothing I express a lot about myself. Through all the colors I wear I express that I love color and hate things that are bland. Through my color coordination I demonstrate that I’m very nitpicky and love to organize things when they match. And through the floral prints I wear I tell the world that I love flowers, and it’s why spring is my favorite time of the year. Being able to see from the Sister’s point of view the significance that clothing has for them to express who they are and their identities, meant a lot to me because it allowed me to connect with a community and individuals who are part of something larger than myself.”

Fashion choices and self-expression unites us all and allows us to have an unspoken voice which interacts with strangers with whom we may only share eye contact. Unspoken truths and history is shared through our clothing and connects my archival journey with my grandma’s Levi’s to the Sister’s Nun attire and the interviews with Sisters. Without asking questions and trying to discover unspoken truths, we would not be able to give voice to those who are silenced, allowing us to discover so much more about ourselves and how united we really are. By interviewing and



giving voice to the Sisters' narratives, I discovered so much and was able to communicate with a community I never thought I'd have so much in common with.

Lorde's idea of addressing and unsettling the barriers that exist between us and the future tie into the clothing we wear and the journey's I experienced while working with my grandmother and the Sisters. Our clothing can carry the lineage of past family members and demonstrate how we've grown and sprouted from that as individuals. In many of the Sister's cases, clothing is about taking pride in all that you are and finding your truth while growing from generational and familial backgrounds into your own variation that best expresses you. The Sisters carry on part of their past lives, continue into our present and show our future selves and generations that there are no restrictions on all that you can express and tell about yourself through your clothing. Future generations will be inspired to not conform to gender-stereotypes in clothing and understand that our clothing touches varying communities of individuals in all settings we take part in. I bridge the barriers of the past into the future through clothing by carrying on my grandmother's stories and memories tied to the Levi's; one day I'll hopefully be able to pass these Levi's down to my daughter and not only share my grandmother's stories but also my own.