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CHAPTER SIX

ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGY
AND CONCIENTIZACIÓN

A Latina Professor's Struggle

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As the youngest daughter of a first generation immigrant family, I am not your traditional "academic." My father, Miguel, was from the popular tourist resort of Mazatlán, Mexico. In the United States he labored as a journeyman brick mason for most of his life. Miguel took great pride in his profession, working hard to remodel the homes of the rich and famous in La Jolla, California. Rosalía, my mother, was born in San José del Cabo, a small fishing village on the tip of Baja California. In San Diego, she toiled as a domestic worker in the homes of moderately wealthy Euro-American families. Born and raised in San Diego, I had family on both sides of U.S.-Mexican border and traveled frequently between these two countries. These conflicting yet co-existing worldviews shaped my culture, identity, and consciousness. As a transborder person the languages and cultures of these countries comingled in me, and I utilized them interchangeably; yet English predominated over Spanish, creating a Chicana identity, distinct from that of a Mexicana.

As an undergraduate college student at University of California at San Diego's Third College during the early 1970s, I became active in various student and labor organizations. I served as cochair of the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA); I was a founder of Mujeres Unidas Para Justicia Educación y Revolución (MUJER), and a student coordinator for

the United Farm Workers (UFW). The political vision of professors such as Angela Davis and Herbert Marcuse inspired me to question the nature of capitalism, to promote student activism, to explore the changing roles of women, and to strategize the relationship between ethnic identity and political empowerment. My direct participation in broad social movements—including the struggle for Civil Rights, opposition to the Vietnam War, and the Women's movement—further shaped my educational and political experience. As student leaders we formed study groups where we analyzed the writings of Karl Marx, Che Guevara, Frantz Fanon, Carlos Mariátegui, Amílcar Cabral, Mao Zedong, and many other leaders of national liberation struggles. We learned that revolutionary political consciousness is an essential component of social change, which in turn is contingent upon a profound restructuring of social institutions. This political knowledge forms the foundation of my argument in this chapter, that personal strategies for retaining and graduating students of color, hiring and tenuring faculty of color, and institutionalizing insurgent disciplines such as Chicano/a Studies are ultimately bankrupt since they do not address the overarching power relations that permeate institutions of higher learning. In support of this argument, I will analyze the concept of *concientización*¹ within the context of my personal journey through academia and my struggle as a professor to create a pedagogy that empowers faculty and students of color.

Class Consciousness and Feminist Ideals

My history of work and education leads me to conclude that without a clear political framework—i.e., *concientización*—I would not have been able to succeed as a student and as a professor. Upon completing my undergraduate education, I diverged from the traditional academic path and sought employment in various industries throughout San Diego. I became one of the first women of color to enter the male world of the aerospace industry when I accepted a job in a plant that made cruise missiles. I also worked as a secretary, high-school teacher, an apprentice, and eventually a journeyman machinist in a shipyard. I labored in a male-dominated world where I challenged unions to address women's issues. At the shipyard where most women swept floors or did secretarial work, I worked in a machine shop. Working within the shipyard proved dirty; women had to earn the respect of all male crews and had to confront unsafe working conditions daily.

I was assigned to a work crew that included Euro-Americans, Mexicans, African Americans, Filipinos, and Vietnamese. While working we engaged in lively discussions about our families, cultural traditions, immigration, the union, politics, and our future goals. From the outset, I made clear my commitment to feminist ideals. My presence challenged the men to avoid cer-

tain topics of discussion, especially those related to sex. I distinctly recall one incident during lunch where "the guys" passed around the latest copy of *Playboy*. When the magazine reached my side of the table the foreman quickly intervened by saying "I am sure you are not interested in what this has to offer," but to his surprise I indicated that I would gladly take it home. The next day the foreman asked what I had done with the *Playboy* and I told him that I had used the paper as kindling in my fireplace. Eventually I was elected as a representative to the leadership conference for our local union where I addressed the need for greater gender representation and more inclusive policies that incorporated the concerns of a racially diverse membership. Although most men were generally hostile to the idea of being directed by a woman; in the end the union elected more Latinos/as and African Americans to leadership positions and agreed to translate union documents into Spanish.

After ten years of working in the labor movement, I returned to the university and pursued a Ph.D. in Sociology. Within the ivy-covered walls, I quickly learned that I did not conform to the dominant racial "aesthetic" of academia. This became evident when I visited the home of a professor to submit a research paper and was mistaken for a friend of the maid by a family member who asked me to enter through the backdoor. More than once I was advised that to succeed in academia, I would have to relinquish my "cultural baggage"—my working-class background, my racial/ethnic identity, and my feminist perspectives. As the only Chicana graduate student in a Sociology department, I came to understand that these instances of cultural imperialism were predicated on the fact that the university did not value my form of cultural capital; this realization served to reinforce my political convictions.

The personal discrimination I experienced led me to a new level of consciousness, infusing my political beliefs, cultural experiences, and theoretical perspectives with a yearning for a new way of life based upon equality. First and foremost, I have concluded that I only survived these "cultural wars"—earning my doctorate and becoming a professor—because of a heightened level of *concientización*. While some of my cohorts—other women of color—either dropped out or transferred to another campus, I had a different vantage point from which to evaluate the unequal gender relations, the contentious class dynamics, and overt and covert cultural subordination that we encountered. I did not view my particular situation simply as a personal trial but understood it as part of a broader systemic structure of power and exclusion. My politicized *concientización* provided me a framework from which to identify the issues of discrimination and inequality, and a position from which to critically reflect upon these issues and their possible solutions. When it became obvious that I could not rely upon academia to validate my cultural identity and experiences, I searched for other sources of support and meaning.

To complicate matters further, by the late 1980s the political orientation on the UCSD campus had dramatically shifted. The students I encountered appeared more interested in working "within the system" rather than radically altering the power relations that structurally subordinated working people, women, Latinos/as, and other people of color. Nonetheless, through an arduous process of contestation and negotiation I managed to carve out a "safe place" within the university to advance my education. After overcoming many odds, I became the first Chicana to receive a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California, San Diego. I presently teach at California State University, Dominguez Hills within the Department of Chicana/o Studies. However, I have multiple areas of interests and my approach is interdisciplinary. I work with Women's Studies, coordinate the service-learning component within Chicana/o Studies, and teach courses on cultural diversity in the School of Education. Like many of my students, I am the first one in my family to acquire a college education. My parents labored long and hard to provide their family with a better life with the hope that someday their children could become professionals, so that we could achieve our goals and make a worthy contribution to society. They never imagined, however, the challenges involved in becoming a university professor.

Developing a Pedagogy of *Concientización*

Within academia I seek to unite my personal and political journey with the new critical approaches implemented in various disciplines. I locate myself within the political framework of the late Brazilian sociologist, Paulo Freire, who defines *concientización* as a process that rejects individualism and stresses an understanding of our relationship to community, nation, and the world. Yet he also cautions that this "... discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action, nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection" (23). Freire sees that through a continual process of "dialogue, reflection and communication," people can direct their political action and achieve praxis. Central to the idea of *concientización* is an understanding of how power is disseminated within academia, replicating economic structures and maintaining privilege (La Belle and Ward 152). This process encourages us to challenge hierarchical structures of authority and develop participatory mechanisms that lead to self-actualization and empowerment for faculty and students. Self-actualization, according to Aruna Srivastava, is a process involving:

... political realization—a recognition of ourselves in history and in the context of differential and fluid relations of power; indeed the actualization of the self necessarily entails the ability to articulate ourselves in institutions, to rec-

ognize how our actions are oppositional, how they are complicit in academic structures of oppression. (115)

This self-realization is a political process of consciousness—a rebirth of sorts—in which we gain a critical understanding of differential power relations and our role within them. *Concientización* requires us to engage structures of power and domination and to question our complicity in oppression. Furthermore, Freire argues against the notion that faculty are objective conveyors of knowledge and students passive observers of the educational process (24). Instead, he encourages faculty and students to examine our social conditions in order "to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in the process of transformation" (70–71). This type of transformation is not immediate, but requires a protracted process of contestation and negotiation at the individual, local, and national level.

The pedagogy of *concientización* highlights the interdependence of critical reflection and political action. Our obligation as educators centers on providing students the analytical tools and practical knowledge that enables them to comprehend the underlying causes of inequality within the contexts of racism, sexism, and classism. Part of this mission includes the imperative to empower students by demonstrating the link between critical thinking in the university and social activism in at-risk communities. For their part, students need to practice democracy by developing and implementing strategies that can help counteract racism and sexism—in their selection of courses, involvement in campus activities, service to their communities and through their participation in the political process. To understand oppression, teachers must adopt an antiracist pedagogy where our experiences, beliefs, and opinions are no longer "neutralized" but instead play a crucial role in the formation of antiracist feminist knowledge (Nieto 169).

Reaching consciousness can be a complex and conflictive process. Gloria Anzaldúa discusses how cultural "collisions" and "incompatible frames of reference" between marginalized and dominant communities produce new forms of a hybrid "mestiza consciousness" (1987, 78). Although the notion of mestiza consciousness can motivate people to engage in general social/political activism, this racialized and cultural consciousness often fails to consider the more complex issues of class, culture, national origin, gender, and even sexuality. Theories that focus on individual solutions fail to address the overarching power relations that permeate educational and civic institutions. While individual change is a significant first step, *concientización* requires the application of broader forms of analysis capable of influencing large segments of the population. Since outlooks that center solely on individual circumstances or culturally based solutions can lead people astray, it behooves us to move away from personal reflections as our

unit of analysis and examine more systematically the structural relationships that exist within education including class background, school resources, and social environment.

Using Freire as a guide, bell hooks expands upon the notion of *concientización* in her book *Teaching to Transgress*. She agrees that education should involve the "practice of freedom" and that classrooms should be an exciting and transformative place to learn. Teachers must be flexible, inclusive, and create an open space for change and invention with the objective of providing students a safe place to dialogue and debate issues with their peers. According to hooks, the "... classroom remains the most radical place of possibility in the academy" since teaching is a performative act where teachers become catalysts and active participants in learning (1994, 12).

Some educators have equated the role of teacher to that of a "bridge" providing students access to knowledge, avenues of communication, and the resources to support their interests (Nieto 115). All students have particular strengths, reflecting specific experiences that should be publicly acknowledged, evaluated, and incorporated into the classroom. One method I have successfully employed requires students to make themselves and their families the object of study. They engage in "free writes" about their neighborhoods, peer groups, gender differences, family socialization, and overt experiences of discrimination and share this information with the class. In this manner they begin to explore new paths of knowledge, linking the home and the school, validating hooks's assertion that the manner in which radical educators think, write, and speak constantly evolves in dialogue with our students.

One of our goals as educators is to create a communal place of learning that can be sustained by a collective process of engagement. No one strategy is complete—nonetheless our approach should take into consideration our students' skills, social environments, and cultural backgrounds. By allowing students to take control of their education, giving them voice in the selection of themes, course assignments, and participation in the evaluation of their peers, we can contest the political apathy endemic in many classrooms. The challenge is to make learning real and meaningful by demonstrating to students how various forms of knowledge can be integrated into the transformation of everyday life. As hooks suggests:

Progressive professors working to transform the curriculum so that it does not reflect biases or reinforce systems of domination are most often the individuals willing to take the risk that engaged pedagogy requires and to make their teaching practices a site of resistance. (1994, 21)

Furthermore, hooks underscores the need to transgress from coercive hierarchies—building democratic relationships premised on mutual control and participation.

Drawing from her own experiences, Sonia Nieto demonstrates how the inequities of poverty and "unrelenting oppression" can place working-class students of color at an educational disadvantage. Adopting Freire's notion of *concientización*, she professes the need for educators to undergo personal transformations in which they step outside of their own worlds and learn about the languages, cultures, values, and experiences of their students. From Nieto's perspective "being antiracist means paying attention to all areas in which some students may be favored over others, including the curriculum, choice of materials, sorting policies, and teacher's interactions and relationships with students and their communities" (169). Similarly, schools need to undergo a radical institutional transformation that rejects sterile curricula and fosters quality education by acknowledging the importance of nurturing positive social relationships. Developing an "antiracist" pedagogy remains a prolonged process that requires constant attention to unlearn the racist stereotypes that permeate education, the media, and society. Roxana Ng takes this notion a step further declaring "antixist and antiracist means seeing sexism and racism as systemic and interpersonal problems" (51). Ng therefore recommends that we combat sexism and racism collectively, not just personally, since, as Chandra Mohanty states, "resistance that is random and isolated is clearly not as effective as that which is mobilized through systematic politicized practices of teaching and learning" (1994, 148).

Feminist pedagogy demands resistance to normative educational practices, for it perceives them neither as neutral nor as the "great equalizers" that many liberals advocate. It is no surprise that the marginalization of faculty of color, women, gays, and lesbians in the academy ultimately leads to their radicalization. Marginalization, according to hooks, need not lead to deprivation, but can provide creative insights or "sites of radical possibility," or "a space of resistance" (1990, 149). My radicalized political consciousness, i.e., my process of *concientización*, emerges out of the conjunction between specific social movements in which I participate—Chicano/a, women, student, and the workers movement—and antiracist feminist theory.

Conflicts and Contradictions Confronted by Faculty of Color

Labor historians and many social scientists have documented the ways in which academia discourages social activism, while claiming to value individual merit and "objectivity." Within this depoliticized context it is not surprising that academic institutions are unprepared to deal with faculty of color who regard their commitment to the political objectives of their communities as an integral part of their intellectual mission. As one Latino faculty member succinctly states:

Faculty of color's circumstances are quite different from other people in that if you have any social consciousness and any identification with your respective ethnic or racial group you are going to want to help in some way, through your discipline or otherwise. (Baez 133)

Within this context, faculty of color who question the patriarchal Eurocentric views of their colleagues suffer negative consequences and are perceived as "oppositional"—or worse, "un-collegial." Faculty who challenge the "status quo" place themselves "at risk" and can incur reprisals from administrators and senior faculty. Under these circumstances, it becomes difficult for progressive intellectuals of color to remain in academia. The solution for progressive and radical faculty, according to the pedagogy of *conciencización*, is not to acquiesce to this coercive hierarchy but to search for creative ways to transform hegemonic structures and, in Freire's words, "become beings for themselves" (61). Following the theoretical legacy of Freire, Anzaldúa, Nieto, and hooks, I attempt to infuse a feminist critique and bicultural orientation into the predominantly male structure that persists in viewing race through an exclusionary black and white paradigm. I have put myself at risk by defending programs, perspectives, and individuals that are crucial to a meaningful and democratic form of education. By assuming the imperatives of institutional reformation—challenging the traditional canon, creating unique course offerings, designing a variety of cultural activities, and promoting community involvement—Latino/a and Ethnic Studies can successfully increase students' interest and establish an antiracist presence on campus.

Nonetheless, the academy as a whole continues to resist these changes, reinforcing the marginalized status of minority professors and forcing us to confront overt and covert forms of racism. For example, a Euro-American female professor once questioned my ability to teach a course on cultural diversity by asking: "What do you know about ethnicity, anyway?" Despite these ongoing conflicts, minority faculty are still expected to assume the role of the "token representative" of our particular racial/ethnic group by assuming responsibility for "multicultural" administrative duties, advising, mentoring, and programming.

Whether or not they embrace the concept of *conciencización*, faculty of color in higher education are expected to be more than traditional conveyors of knowledge. We confront a broad array of responsibilities and conflicting sets of obligations that tend to counterpose the demands of the academy against the needs and desires of students to improve the conditions in their respective racial/ethnic communities. While academia generally stifles community activism by faculty of color, it also perceives their cultural identity as a liability that needs to be "managed"; thus many of us are forced to confront the contradiction between the intellectual practices of the acad-

emy and our own cultural identities. Two Chicanos prominently featured in the 1997 video documentary *Shattering the Silences*—Gloria Holguín Cuádriz, a sociologist at Arizona State University, and Alex Saragoza, a Latin American historian at the University of California, Berkeley—illuminate the cultural clash and class antagonism exhibited at their universities. Cuádriz and Saragoza echo the same sense of alienation and marginalization that María de la Luz Reyes expresses in her essay "Chicanas in Academe: An Endangered Species." These professors of color underscore the absence of institutional support and the sense of exclusion they confront at their universities. Cuádriz stresses the feeling of being invisible in the eyes of the administration while de la Luz Reyes addresses how Chicana professors confront Euro-American students and colleagues who question their credentials and even their ability to teach.

Alienation in academia represents more than simple intellectual isolation; it can also involve significant personal sacrifice. Many promising faculty of color have paid a heavy price for their refusal to conform to the status quo. In some cases, the mere presence of a faculty member of color is perceived as a challenge to those who hold the reigns of power in the academy. As de la Luz Reyes points out, academia suppresses our voices, dismisses our ideas, and devalues our contributions. Many faculty of color work in academic departments that neglect to mentor us or promote our professional and political interests. Additionally, some of the more established faculty of color regard their racial identity, class background, and/or feminist ideals as "problems" that generate tension and conflict within their predominantly Euro-American departments.

I have personally experienced the trauma of marginalization and racism. My racial and ethnic identity as well as my sociological approach has unsettled some of my colleagues in traditional disciplines. In one department where I worked, I was asked to adapt to a middle-class Euro-American experience that served as the operative intellectual and cultural framework. Far from an isolated incident, three other faculty of color in different departments faced similar circumstances. Although my colleagues claimed to support diversity, in practice they impeded its implementation. Nevertheless, I continued to interact in Spanish when appropriate, to encourage students to connect with local Chicano/Latino communities and to explore cultural perspectives different from their own. Unfortunately, the effects of racist practices in academia disrupt political alliances among faculty of color: in this case, some Chicana/o faculty, even those with tenure, quietly acquiesced to white, middle-class normativity. As Freire states, the "struggle for freedom threatens not only the oppressor, but also their oppressed comrades who are fearful of still greater repression" (32).

While those of us situated within insurgent departments such as Ethnic or Latino/a studies may enjoy the support of our departments, we are often

racially segregated from the Anglo majority in mainstream departments. Within these segregated conditions, faculty of color are given exclusive responsibility for promoting and building our departments and are forced to continuously recruit students and majors in order to justify and maintain our presence on campus. Significantly, this burden is not shared equally among minority faculty, since unpoliticized faculty of color may not share this critical consciousness and thus may feel no obligation to serve the intellectual and cultural interests of their ethnic group. Moreover, it is seldom the case that Euro-American colleagues encounter these types of perplexing and contradictory situations that divide faculty "communities" on campus.

While confronting these complex sets of conditions, faculty of color nonetheless must establish their reputations within academic institutions dominated by a Euro-American aesthetic. For example, at the 23 California State University campuses, nearly 80 percent of the faculty are Euro-American, and men constitute a two-thirds majority. Latino/a professors, as well as other faculty of color, remain dramatically underrepresented and constitute less than 7 percent of the faculty system-wide (CSUDH Institutional Research Website). As Barbara Robles has noted, the "lack of diversity within the academy hinders collegial collaboration, joint intellectual inquiry, and the formation of an academic environment dedicated to discovery" (102). This white and male-dominated administration sets institutional policies, hires the faculty, and dictates the mission of the university. They pass judgement on faculty of color and stand as a "disquieting reminder that white male academics continue to set the parameters of what is considered acceptable research within their own disciplines and, in so doing, pass on their own intellectual preconceptions and limitations" (Robles 103). At a time when significant demographic shifts have occurred in society, we must address the glaring underrepresentation of faculty of color in academic institutions. Under these adverse conditions, even the individual successes of minority faculty, no matter how significant, do not alter the dramatic racial gap in faculty representation. We need concerted antiracist action to mobilize faculty, students, and other constituencies to pressure university administrations to concretely address institutionalized racism and sexism.

Regardless of the political commitment of faculty of color, the rigors of academic life rarely allow faculty of color the opportunity to adequately conduct research, teach classes, serve on committees, mentor students, and tend to their personal lives. Research requires time away from classes, students, and campus activities in order to think, read, and write. Furthermore, university administrators and senior colleagues often devalue the research areas and publication venues of faculty of color, since innovative topics and controversial perspectives that question the hegemonic structures and policies of the academy are often deemed to be purely ideological, and nonintellectual. The underlying tensions that result from being pulled in opposing directions

are often difficult to reconcile. María de la Luz Reyes refers to this tension as walking a tightrope between the demands of our professional career and the need to contribute to our ethnic community while maintaining our own cultural identity (17). Undoubtedly, this balancing act requires much skill and places faculty of color at constant risk of failure.

Faculty of color face an ongoing dilemma as we continually confront questions of how to prioritize academic and political objectives, since conventional definitions of merit privilege scholarship and teaching and disparage service and community activities as a misuse of minority scholars' time. Paradoxically, while the service of minority faculty is rarely taken into account for promotion and tenure, colleges and universities insist upon minority faculty labor in order to adequately serve students' nonacademic needs. Thus, service is a doubled-edged sword that creates much controversy. At one level, multicultural service duties can be the downfall of faculty of color, since it causes dispersal and may undermine scholarly productivity. But this criticism does not take into account the view explicit in *concienciación* that critical education involves creating political communities that work to restructure existing relations of power in academia. Freire reminds us that isolating ourselves in the "ivory tower" does not produce transformative results. He states: "Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. It is true that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world. . . ." (64). Service that is linked to activism remains essential if one seeks to improve the status of people of color within academia and the broader community. As both Exum and Baez point out, service fulfills a variety of important functions "for both the faculty member and institution, because such participation increases the diversity of perspective, ensures sensitivity to the needs of people of color, and may be personally and politically rewarding to faculty of color" (Baez 132).

Official service on departmental or campus-wide committees is regularly validated since it augments the mission and reputation of the university. In contrast, work with students or ethnic groups is not formally acknowledged but instead viewed as disconnected from the academic realm. Rather than privilege one arena over another, we should require the university to expand the ethical dimensions of service to students and community whether inside or outside the classroom. The establishment of an equitable system of acknowledgement and rewards for the time and dedication professors invest in their students and prospective communities would situate college campuses as part of the total reality in which we live and learn. For as Astin suggests, the sole outcome of an education is not for students merely to earn "As" but to encourage them to become lifelong learners by exposing them to experiential forms of knowledge applied in real life situations.

Challenges and Expectations of Working-Class Latino/a Students

To complicate matters further, rarely do students fully comprehend the conflicting dilemmas that faculty of color face within the university. The academy expects professors to conduct research and serve on departmental and academic committees. Students, on the other hand, want faculty of color to be mentors, provide meaningful courses, and "protect" them from an insensitive university system that is often blind to their specific academic and social needs. Students look to faculty of color to serve as role models, as advisers/counselors and in emergencies, as surrogate parents. The faculty member fills the gap that exists between the family, community, and the campus environment. This becomes an arduous responsibility that doesn't "fit" conveniently within office hours, nor within the constraints and limitations faculty confront within an educational environment in which the dynamics of domination, oppression, and competition are still the normative mode of operation.

As Freire informs us, students are not empty vessels for us to write upon—or for educators to imprint their ideas upon—but human beings whose feelings, expressions, and experiences have to be recognized and engaged in the classroom. Thus, our classes must provide new insights and interpretations of diverse social realities, since they are populated by students of all races, ethnicities, languages, classes, and cultures. In addition, faculty must diversify the perspectives from which we teach in order to dethrone prevailing Eurocentric curricula and modes of thought. The public university or college must not reproduce a "plantation system" in which the students from predominantly diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds are governed and instructed by a majority Euro-American faculty. As critical educator Antonia Darder explains:

The dominant pedagogy of American schools predominantly reflects the values, worldview, and belief system of the dominant culture's middle and upper classes, while it neglects and ignores the lived experiences of subordinate cultures. Hence students of color are silenced and their bicultural experiences negated and ignored, while they are systematically educated into the discourse of the dominant culture—an ethnocentric ideology that perceives the discourse of the other as inferior, invaluable and deficient in regards to the aims of American society. (68)

Darder clearly depicts the process by which Latino/a students' voices have been systematically silenced and their experiences negated or ignored. Until recently, the history, culture, and contributions of people of color have been conspicuously absent from public discourse and thereby excluded from most

universities. Consequently, the level of engagement of students of color within the classroom has been limited. Under these conditions, some students of color have become alienated and disinterested in traditional areas of study. Conversely, when students of color enroll in ethnic/gender studies and engage relevant ideas, they develop a strong sense of inclusion and intellectual solidarity (Flores 209). We can learn from this how racial and ethnic difference among our students forces us to grapple with the complex and contradictory ways that individual beliefs, personal experiences, institutional norms, and political ideologies converge in the classroom and dictate policies within the university.

By employing a critical analysis and continual reflection that draws upon common lived experiences and a willingness to take risks, faculty can devise antiracist feminist pedagogies that enlighten and empower. We must have the courage to step outside our own frame of reference so that we can relate to "others," nurture mutual trust, and establish the conditions for cultural democracy on our campuses. Even on the most diverse campuses, racial stereotyping and segregation continue to inhibit students of color from working in coalition across racial lines.

Students must build bridges between the diverse elements of the Latino/a community while at the same time engaging the broader society. Only by shattering the prominent stereotypes that continue to shape negative behavior and produce low expectations can this be accomplished. The general orientation may lead us to critically examine or debate conflicting perspectives such as ethnocentrism, racism, homophobia, cultural nationalism, *machismo* or *marianismo*. Our goal is to instill a higher level of consciousness, or *conciencización*, with the distinct understanding that "cada mente es un mundo" (each mind is a world). Once developed, students will have to situate this knowledge to suit their own circumstances, frames of reference, and political desires.

The goal of ethnic studies should not be to promote the sort of romanticized ethnic pride that characterized the male-dominated cultural nationalist ideas of the Chicano movement in the 1960s. Ethnic studies should provide students the theoretical tools to address issues of class, racial/ethnic identity formation, immigration, gender and sexuality, and other complex issues. This is particularly true for Latinos/as since the process of globalization has created dynamic exchanges between the homeland and the immigrant communities within the United States. Consequently, Chicano/Latino studies have become more broadly defined and culturally diverse—addressing the transnational, cross-cultural realities of U.S. Latino communities that now join together Mexican, Central, South American, and Caribbean people. These immigration and demographic changes force us to also address the concerns of Latinos/as from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, including African, Asian, Indigenous, and mixed race peoples. This diversity

and geographic diffusion create new fissures as well as points of convergence, or as Flores and others have noted "more complex, interactive and transgressive notions of hybrid and multiple social points of view" (210). Some scholars have envisioned the emergence of a new level of pan-ethnic unity. Unity, however, cannot be premised upon imaginary cultural ties. Given the profound and expansive cultural transformation in Latino communities, we are now faced with the challenge of creating pan-Latino coalitions across differences of class, gender, generation, national origin and ancestry, color, religion, and other distinguishing factors.

Classroom Dynamics:
Creating A Community of Engaged Learners

Underrepresented students offer a unique set of challenges for faculty of color. To better understand student expectations, I queried several groups at California State University, Dominguez Hills. The students who shared their views were mostly children of immigrants who live in the inner city and have working-class backgrounds. Students' concerns centered around two basic areas: first, hiring faculty who are sensitive to students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds and working to integrate these subjugated areas into the curriculum; second, ensuring access to faculty by encouraging meaningful intellectual engagement and greater opportunities for interaction between faculty and students. These expectations address the dramatic needs confronted by the majority of Latino/a students who attend community colleges, state universities, or even prestigious private institutions.

One way to address students' needs is to employ the concept of "modeling." Central to liberatory pedagogy, modeling allows us to lead by example, utilizing real life experiences to exemplify a point. Once we demonstrate the courage to expose our lives by inviting students' evaluations and comments, we forge open lines of communication. Under these conditions, classrooms can become places of active dialogue that promote intense contestation and negotiation. In these discussions, divergent worldviews and political perspectives intersect. This pedagogical strategy rigorously interrogates ideas, opinions, and ideologies. As Aruna Srivastava informs us:

The classroom cannot help but be, at times chaotic, confusing and disordered, a place of pain, denial, anger, and anxiety—all of which we expect, we have to expect, when challenging others and ourselves to examine, even simply reveal, the ways in which all sorts of racism have inflected our/their identities. (121)

To move beyond abstract concepts of knowledge, I encourage students to consider new forms of writing including personal narratives, oral histories,

plays, and poems. My goal is to use their personal experiences to promote growth and inspire their creative imaginations. To counter notions of individualism, I underscore the importance of collaboration and self-critique—combining group projects with individual endeavors. By using various mediums such as music, films, and plays to present concrete information from multiple perspectives, I am able to challenge students to broaden their visions and deepen their understanding of the world and their places in it. I attempt to make critical theories meaningful to their life experiences, regardless of whether the topic is gangs, teen pregnancy, immigration, or labor. As Manuela, a Salvadorian student, pointed out in March of 2000:

The courses I enjoyed the most during my college years were psychology, sociology, and Chicana/o Studies. In all these courses, facts were not enough. In class, we all gave our personal points of view in regards to social and educational issues that in many cases ended up in serious debates among students.

As students become engaged in their education within the context of antiracist classroom practices, they are more likely to develop an interest in the political process. For example, Rogelio, a history major from El Salvador, criticized his classmates who were quick to accept hegemonic racist views about Latinos/as. At times, his politicized consciousness brought him into conflict with other students over the role of gangs, the nature of discrimination and police brutality. But even politicized students like Rogelio may encounter difficulty in distinguishing between individual, group, and institutional responsibility for discrimination. In these cases, a pedagogy of *concientización* prompts students to examine the structural apparatuses that support racism.

Students may just as likely react to antiracist feminist pedagogy by retreating into silence or denial. Silence ensures invisibility; it provides protection and masks the rage students can feel when confronted with racism and sexism (Srivastava 117; Montoya 536). Speaking about politically motivated but deeply personal issues requires not only courage and conviction but also academic preparation. Thus, our task in the classroom centers upon convincing students that their experiences matter and are relevant to the production of revolutionary knowledge, that they can become agents of change, that they have the power to challenge racist and sexist domination. I teach students that rather than internalizing their anger or passively accepting discrimination, they need to engage in collective action that fosters social change. This response demonstrates how a liberatory classroom encourages the pedagogical goals of discovery and learning.

Linking Service to Activism: Empowerment and Transformation

Besides engaging critical issues, the pedagogy of *conciencización* requires that professors step outside of the classroom and connect with students in multiple ways. I see mentoring in a politicized context, thus I believe, along with Freire, that its main purpose is to facilitate revolutionary learning outside the classroom and thereby refocus our energy on institutional, as opposed to personal or individual strategies for liberation. Mentoring students presents multiple challenges. As a female professor of color, I find myself in a perpetual catch-22. Many of the dilemmas I face are framed by my racialized feminist and political principles or what Patricia Hill Collins defines as the "ethic of caring." Female professors of color who mentor students encounter a host of gender biases that most men never confront. Many students expect women academics to assume the role of surrogate mother, providing them with "unconditional nurturing." Students' socialization leads them to become dependent on female professors who they anticipate are open and approachable. However, they do not put these same burdens on male colleagues whom they may perceive as distant, disinterested, and authoritarian. This places women faculty of color in a paradoxical situation. For example, when, because of my own multiple responsibilities, I am unable to immediately attend to my students' needs, they are quick to criticize me and label me as "creída" (uppity). In their minds, my image shifts from the "all forgiving nurturing mother" to the heartless "bearded mother" who exercises power over her students (Friedman 206; Morgan 50).

Alexander Astin and others document the importance of faculty and student interaction inside and outside the classroom as an essential factor in a quality education. Astin emphasizes that within the California State University system, the potential failure or success of students is ultimately determined by the quality of the interaction with the professor. He argues that students at elite institutions possess the expertise required to maneuver through complex systems. Faced with substandard educational systems and limited resources many students of color who enter the CSU system are academically vulnerable. The importance of establishing personal connections with students is reinforced by Stanton-Salazar, Vásquez, and Mehan who claim that "in order to be successful, students need to establish social relationships with those people who are not only technically capable of providing support, but who are also committed to doing so" (124). Once the student and professor establish a democratic relationship based on trust and mutual respect, direct intervention can lead to transformation.

Beyond academic mentoring we are being asked to compensate for the inequities of the secondary educational system that fails to train students to

think analytically, research their own projects independently and produce the expository essays required at the university. Moreover, students whose writing skills need attention often view critical comments as a personal affront and not as constructive criticism. I have overheard student's say that "I bloodied their paper" precisely because they are so unaccustomed to receiving any type of detailed critique of their written work. Under these circumstances mentoring students can, for many, become a burden. In contrast, Robles notes the high level of commitment of Latina faculty and their willingness to "engage in multiple leadership roles by sharing information on career opportunities, establishing networks of scholarly support, providing necessary research and instructional guidance, and generally helping ensure that future Latino women leaders and young intellectuals avoid the adobe ceiling that many encounter" (98). This type of commitment is admirable, but are we creating expectations for ourselves as unrealistic as those held by the students? Are we placing an undue amount of responsibility on the shoulders of minority faculty to ensure the academic success of the students? Faculty are not solitary agents of change; alone they cannot compensate for the lack of public commitment, or the absence of institutional support for students of color. Politicized and/or well-meaning faculty who unselfishly assume these multiple roles can, in the end, simply absolve the institution of its ultimate responsibility for addressing students' needs.

Conclusions

Latina professors, as María de la Luz Reyes insightfully illuminates, remain an "endangered species," since very few of us actually complete our degrees, enter academia, or receive tenure. But equality within higher education is not a privilege; it is right that many have struggled to establish. We must have the courage to defend the principle of equality within higher education in order to create the conditions for others to follow. The changing racial/ethnic composition of our students forces us to grapple with the contradictory ways that traditional canons have undermined educational opportunities for students of color. Eurocentric institutional norms and political ideologies continue to shape the subject matter we teach and related social attitudes. Under these circumstances, it is no longer sufficient to merely promote a "liberal" tolerance for differences that incorporates the experience of people of color as a postscript in the curriculum. This additive approach leads to indifference or worse yet, reproduces existing patterns of exclusion and segregation. The limited resources, hostile environment, and lower academic expectations that permeate public schools leave marginalized students ill-equipped to cope with the demands of the university. Consequently, students' shortcomings do not reflect their lack of personal initiative, but rather underscore the structural and economic inequity that places

people of color and those from working-class origins on an unequal footing with their Euroamerican and class-privileged peers.

In keeping with the philosophy of *concientización*, the mission of radical educators of color is to empower students to take control of their own destinies, both inside and outside of academia. Through critical reflection and self-actualization, we can raise the level of consciousness among students and transform classrooms into sites of antiracist, feminist resistance and hope. By providing students of all backgrounds the public space necessary to voice their opinions and the power to make decisions about their educational process, we can create the conditions for a community of learners who possess the vision and commitment necessary to help transform the broader society.

Note

1. *Concientización* is a conceptual framework originated by Paulo Freire in his theory of radical education and political reform; I will be mobilizing this concept throughout this chapter. Gloria Anzaldúa takes up Freire's concept in her theory of *mestiza consciousness*, which she elaborates in *Borderlands: La Frontera* and *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*.

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