

# Interviews



# Interview with the Chicana Motherwork Collective

*Cecilia Caballero, Ph.D. Candidate, USC; Dr. Yvette Martínez-Vu, Assistant Director, UCSB McNair Scholars Program; Dr. Judith C. Pérez-Torres, University of Utah; Dr. Michelle Téllez, Assistant Professor, University of Arizona, Tucson; Christine Vega, Ph.D. Candidate, UCLA.*

*Interview questions by Mester Editors-in-Chief Carolina Beltrán, Ph.D. Candidate at UCLA and Isabel Gómez, Assistant Professor at University of Massachusetts-Boston.*

*When we learn to speak, we are learning to translate; the child who asks his mother the meaning of a word is really asking her to translate the unfamiliar term into the simple words he already knows. In this sense, translation within the same language is not essentially different from translation between two tongues, and the history of all peoples parallel the child's experience.*

—Octavio Paz in “Translation:  
Literature and Letters” (152)

**Mester:** How did you develop the concept of Chicana M(other)work?<sup>1</sup>  
Why *Chicana*? Why *Motherwork*?

**Chicana Motherwork:** One of our members, Michelle, was the one to initially come up with the concept of Chicana Motherwork. She had published a piece in an anthology by Demeter Press called *Latinal/Chicana Mothering* (2013) that was later (2014) adapted for *The Feminist Wire*, titled “Personal is Political: Chicana Motherwork” where she borrowed the theoretical term “motherwork” from Patricia Hill Collins. Collins uses motherwork to think about Black mothers and women of color and their mothering as labor. In other words,

motherwork refers to the work that women of color provide to educate, care, nurture, and discipline their communities amidst issues of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression. Michelle then applied this term in relation to her own experience as someone who self-identifies as a Chicana, as someone whose parents are Mexican and whose mother is a migrant, as someone who must constantly navigate cultural and political borders while raising a child of color in the U.S. Once the group came together in 2014 for a panel on Mothers of Color in academia at the American Studies Association conference, the phrase Chicana Motherwork applied to the rest of us as well because we too self-identify as Chicanas, as mothers, as first-generation students, and scholars.<sup>2</sup> Through our collaboration we've also reframed the concept to *Chicana M(other)work* because we wanted to demonstrate the ways in which our labor is layered and we uphold how we mother in multiple ways and in multiple settings.

**M: How do you work together? What are your best practices and why? How does your “individual” research and your training in different fields inform your work as a collective?**

**CMW:** Since we have all resided in different parts of the country, most of the work we do is virtual. When we come together, through video chatting and conference calls, we get to dream about what we hope to create for ourselves, for our community, for our families. What can our work do? We are non-hierarchical and make decisions through consensus. We are lucky because we all bring different strengths to our collective and can delegate tasks between ourselves depending on our schedules and different skill set. We also get together in person a few times a year by presenting at a national conference or organizing a writing retreat. Our project is interdisciplinary, therefore everything we do is informed by multiple disciplines. Some of us are trained in social science methods while others in humanities methods. This is reflected in our writing through the integration of statistics and other data as well as the integration of close readings and *testimonios*. We believe that interdisciplinary scholarship strengthens the work we do because our writing is informed not only by multiple experiential voices but multiple academic perspectives as well.

As a collective, we also actively practice self and community care. We holistically value ourselves, each other, our children, and communities. This kind of care work can look like many things, such

as the five of us participating in a healing circle, organizing reading circles for discussing women of color literary works, mentoring women of color youth from our communities, and more. In these ways, we actively reject the neoliberal institutional model of the individual scholar and we redefine what “success” means to us on our own terms as a collective. For us, this means taking care of each other, our children, and our communities in a sustaining, reciprocal, and liberating way.

**M: What are the benefits or challenges in combining scholarship with activist work? How do you see the connection between your research and your activism?**

**CMW:** Our activism and commitments are embedded in our research, in our methodologies, in our interactions with one another; we cannot separate our world views from our work, it’s both epistemological and ontological. For us the benefits are many. In telling our stories, we also tell the stories of many who have been silenced within and outside the academy, particularly mothers of color. We have received an outpouring of support from individuals in similar positions who did not or could not speak up. That’s empowering. However, we realize that the challenge of combining activism with scholarship is that we can potentially place ourselves in a vulnerable and risky position. When we call out injustices and forms of institutional violence, we are also facing the consequences of that. Whether it is applying for a fellowship and not getting it because you revealed yourself as a mother, including childcare expenses on a budget even when we are advised by tenured professors that we should not do so despite the need, or applying for a tenure-track job and being rejected because your work was deemed “too political,” or being denied tenure due to discrimination against mothers and lack of adequate resources related to parenting. The institution pushes mothers of color out of the academy simply for speaking out and being open about their multiple identities. We acknowledge and accept that risk. As Audre Lorde reminds us, our silence will not protect us.

**M: Your website showcases work in different media: video *testimonio*, writing, podcasts, memorials, and interviews. Some key texts on intersectional decolonial feminism, such as *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981) and *Revolutionary Mothering* (2016), take a similar approach. How do you see the diversity of the genres and forms your work takes**

**as connected to your research or your politics? How do you perform your research in public space, on or offline?**

**CMW:** Most mainstream media consistently centers white privilege and caters to a white audience; this is why we strongly believe in people of color, and specifically women of color, producing our own media in ways that are free and widely accessible. For example, we see our podcast as part of a larger wave of other podcasts, such as *Black Girls Talking*, *Parenting for Liberation*, *We Want the Airwaves*, *Radio Menea*, and more: along with these other examples, we collectively center people of color voices and issues related to social justice and politics. Digital media storytelling can be a new platform to perform research and a form of digital humanities—even though an advanced degree isn’t required to do this kind of work. That’s what we hope to emphasize: anyone can do this, it’s not based on degrees or merit. For us, we decided that we wanted to pursue this scholarly and activist project via mediums and genres that are accessible. Part of our effort to have our voices heard includes working with multiple mediums that can immediately reach audiences either through social media or a podcast. We also present at conferences and are working on publications, however, we realize how limited those spaces are. With a conference, you are limited to reaching only those who are educationally privileged and those who can pay expensive conference fees and travel costs. The audience can be anywhere from three to maybe twenty people. With an academic publication, we are generally limited in terms of our timing. So many academic journals and presses take at least two years from the time of submitting to the time of publication. Some of the issues we are targeting are pressing matters. We cannot always wait two years to address issues affecting us today. Likewise, we also identify as members of a broader community: we are community-embedded scholars. Even in social media outlets, we realize we may not attract the largest audience because our discourse can include academic jargon, and not everyone has access to computer literacy or the internet. Still, we do our best to reach a larger audience and not to exclude anyone in our conversations.

**M:** In your video, you define Chicana M(other)work with key-words, including “decolonial, intergenerational, spiritual” and more. Can you say more about these qualities?

**CMW:** The keywords that we use in our *testimonio* video come from a writing retreat we had in Arizona in Fall 2015. Through our conversations and sharing of our experiences and commitments, these terms kept regenerating themselves. When we use terms like carework, decolonial, intergenerational, and spiritual, we position ourselves in conversation with other individuals who provide care, who fight against imperialism, who have suffered from intergenerational violence and traumas, and who strive to find non-western and/or indigenous and ancestral forms of healing.

**M:** This issue's theme is "Translation, Travel, and Circulation." What is your relationship to the languages of Chicana activism and thought? How have you experienced language politics as Chicana mothers? How might bilingual education relate to Chicana M(other)work? How do the politics of language intersect with other forms of marginalization, in your experience or your research?

**Yvette:** Language politics is something we experience every day. In my home, language justice and translation is an everyday practice. As a mother who is raising a bicultural, biracial, and multilingual son, I acknowledge that language is a large part of his background and can grant him access to a lot of cultural knowledge, especially when traveling to places like Mexico and Vietnam, where both sides of his family are from. Integrating a multilingual education in my home is no easy feat. To be honest, I'm not sure how fluent my son will be in both Spanish and Vietnamese. The preschool he attends full-time is a predominantly English-speaking environment where Spanish is offered to him as an extracurricular activity a few times a week. His father and I mostly communicate in English. Our son is also a special needs child with a diagnosed speech disorder. All the therapy he receives is in English. Still, we do our best to make sure he has access to all three languages, whether that's taking him to his Tita's house, or visiting his Ông nội's house, or reading to him in different languages. My hope is that eventually we can place him in a dual-immersion school, however, that option is not available to us right now. As the other *mujeres* mention, dual-immersion school are not as prevalent as I believe they should be in a place like Southern California, and the few schools that are available have years-long waitlists or are too expensive to afford. When someone critiques our family because my son is not yet fluent in Spanish or Vietnamese,

they fail to recognize the many obstacles that limit our ability to sustain our native languages.

**Cecilia:** I live in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles, with my six-year-old son. The community is 95% Mexican and Latinx, so Spanish is spoken nearly everywhere, from street corners to the mercado to birthday parties and community events and more. However, I had a very hard time finding a dual-immersion kindergarten in Spanish. After doing research, I found that most dual-immersion programs are located on the West side of Los Angeles for white, affluent parents and their children. It is shocking to me that children on the East side, which is predominantly Mexican and Latinx, are denied a chance to retain and/or learn the language spoken in their homes and communities. The lack of accessible dual-immersion programs and dedicated brown teachers who look like them and live in their communities is another form of institutional racism in our public education system. With Chicana M(other)work and our growing network of mothers of color and allies, I hope that we can continue advocating for dual-immersion programs. On a related note, I believe that my training in a PhD program has impacted my language and the ways in which I write. As a first-generation, low-income student of color, I am very conscious about making my written work accessible. As Chicana writer Carla Trujillo once told me, she had to un-learn that kind of academic writing that was instilled throughout her PhD program.

**Judi:** While Spanish was the first language in our home, my mom always reminds me of the time she had to put me on check because I thought I was all bad speaking English when we would visit Mexico over summer vacations. I was the dark brown girl ashamed of speaking Spanish: even at that age, I had realized Spanish was seen as “less than” in my school. It was through my involvement in an English-Spanish dual-immersion program during my graduate years in college that I learned the impact and importance of dual programs that I then decided I would enroll my children in dual programs. Unfortunately, in the school district I recently moved to, when I asked if they offered any dual programs, they assumed I was referring to ESL programs because they had noticed I wrote down Spanish on my daughter’s enrollment application. The reason I put down Spanish was to notify that we spoke Spanish and English in our home. As a result of such assumptions, I decided to enroll my daughter in the next available dual program, Mandarin-English as there was a waiting list for the

only other Spanish-English dual program near my area. It goes back to what Ceci talks about in terms of accessibility, as we have discussed with frustration in the car on our way to conferences.

**Christine:** The simple act of naming my son a P'urépecha first name and a Nahuatl Middle name, with both his parent's last names, was a politicized act of resistance that stemmed from my genealogies of Chicana activism in my community, but also as an act of visibility and validity of our past history. My son's name was given to him by my partner whose family is from Michoacán. My family migrated so much that I have no record of my ancestors, but through ceremonies stemming from Danza Mexica and Mexican Indian spiritualities, I wanted to acknowledge those teachings by honoring my son with his name. I have received pushback about his name, but I assertively stand strong, reminding them of colonial histories of erasures and why his name is important. I was raised in a Spanish-speaking household as well, and our son is English-dominant and knows sign-language because we have relatives who are deaf. He also knows songs in Nahuatl because of ceremony, and our hope is that he continues the legacy of speaking in Spanish like his grandparents. My biggest battle, however, is defending his name. I am also curious to explore conversations about raising boys. Most of the Chicana M(other)work collective are raising cis-male children however, thinking about sexualities I am led to explore how Chicana Feminism and activism, will allow us to imagine how we can raise our "boys" through a critical Chicana M(other)work lens. For example, to dismantle the problematic term "momma's-boy," I ask us to reimagine how this term affects, infantilizes, and serves as an anti-chicana feminism to call "men" or "boys" this. I've been grappling with this term: I would like my son to come to me if he needs advice, or *consejos*. I would like to be the one he trusts with issues of women or other men, especially in making big decisions. We have to stop using derogatory terms such as "momma's-boy" and creating a division between men and the trust they have towards their mothers, othermothers, and women in general.

**Michelle:** Chicana M(other)work is deeply embedded, as both a concept and praxis, in the politics of language. Language codifies our life experiences—what we feel, see, hear—and how we move in the world. In my childhood home, I was raised by a pocho father and a Mexican mother, and at our dinner table we would move between English and Spanish seamlessly. This experience necessarily shaped how I move

in the world, and yet this very experience is something that is not translatable to my daughter because our lives are so very different. If it was a challenge for my mother to teach me Spanish to be able to communicate with our immediate family in Mexico and beyond, it is nearly impossible to do the same with my own daughter, especially given the nativist backlash in the state of Arizona. Similar to Ceci's experience, in my daughter's dual-immersion (Spanish/English) schooling, those she is surrounded with are white affluent families who recognize the value in bilingualism and have the privilege to access it. While I too understand language as an asset and a decolonial strategy of resistance, I also have the privilege of access and am relying on an US-ian schooling system to teach my daughter the language of her family. Moreover, in our home we are English dominant for reasons that are not easily covered here, and are recovering our Indigenous ways of being. Indeed, it is only through the lens of Chicana M(other) work that allows us to critically uncover the layered, and often contradictory, identitarian positions we carry and impart to our children and communities.

**M:** What do you think about expanding discourses of motherwork as the nurturing work of all? At the MOCA protest at UCLA on May 10, 2016 participants chanted "Soy Mamá, Somos Mamás!" expressing solidarity with mothers on campus. Audre Lorde states a similar hope:

I see the nurturing principle as also one of the saviors of the human race, whether it occurs in women or whether it occurs in men. I am very much in touch with mine. I think we are all mothers in that sense. You see, what we have done essentially, is relegate to that word 'mother' a whole set of feelings and patterns of relationships with other human beings that are basically nurturing, that are basically helpful. We've said, those belong to mother and nowhere else. I believe that that word 'mother' needs to be fed into the grinder and come out M-H-T, whatever, come out initials, or come out just pap which we can then spread, because I believe it is part and parcel of us all. (5)

Can you comment on this claim to the title of mother for all kinds of nurturing? What do we gain or lose by doing so?

**CMW:** When some of us were at that protest and we heard that chant by all of the supporters, it was uplifting! Men were chanting it too! We strongly believe that mothering should be a community effort. Just as we break away from traditional norms that teach us to work alone, we also break away from traditional gender norms that place mothering as the responsibility of one individual to be the mother. That's not to say that we should ignore the postpartum physical conditions that birth mothers often deal with. But also, the work of mothering, whether you're a biological mother, adoptive mother, stepmother, or othermother also bears with it a weight that affects one physically. We believe that it can be positive and productive to use mothering as an inclusive term, to think about the ways that individuals who choose to be childfree or are childless due to their circumstances can also provide motherwork for their community. This is what we mean when we call on our allies or comrades to join us and offer their time, services, and labor to help parents. Placing the emphasis on the term "mothering" rather than "parenting" is placing the focus on the individuals that are often, though not always, bearing a larger amount of parenting responsibilities from breastfeeding, to childcare, to domestic labor. That doesn't mean we are excluding othermothers and other-fathers, single-parents, queer parents, or other forms of kinship. We also don't necessarily equate mothering with "nurturing," but we do want to call attention to the conditions of mothers, particularly what mothers of color and Chicana mothers experience due to the cultural expectations associated with that role.

**M:** We are interested in the connection between the generally marginalized status of labor in our society, especially emotional labor and care labor, and the loss of women, mothers, and Chican@ or Latin@ individuals from the education pipeline. Can you talk about your research as related to your interests in improving education outcomes for other Chicanas?

**CMW:** Our project is about imagining possibilities, visibility, and offering a concept that administrators, teachers and colleagues can understand. Building on ethnic studies, critical race theory, and Chicana feminist epistemologies, we aim to uplift and empower mothers of color within and outside educational spaces by making our lives visible. We believe it's important to call attention to the leaks in the Chicana/o Latina/o educational pipelines stemming from the K-12

educational system as well as those for women and mothers as they climb the educational ladder. The research, and our lived experience, calls attention to the microaggressions we face, the myth of meritocracy that we are trying to debunk, and our under-representation. We hope to inspire others to keep pursuing their education and other professional goals. Often, we find that many of our youth continue to believe in the misconception that to be a mother or a professional is mutually exclusive, that you cannot do both. We aim to demystify this by proving to them that yes, we are mothers and yes, it's possible to also be scholars and activists. Yet, because these academic institutions can be toxic, we support those who make the choice to leave academia or those who didn't necessarily have a choice and were pushed out from the educational pipeline.

**M: How do you relate practices of healing from pain and trauma with acts of motherwork? What can greater attention to motherwork teach us about healing from physical or emotional pain?**

**CMW:** All five of us have experienced some form of intergenerational abuse and trauma in our families. Our project is not simply a project to heal others but also to heal ourselves and our communities. Each time we come together, we not only work on our project but we carve out time to check in on one another and take care of each other by offering *consejos* or support. On several occasions, we just had to put our work aside and gather together to support one another as that is more important to us. We cannot speak of healing to others until we learn how to heal our current traumas. While healing is a process, it takes a strong group of *mujeres* to share and feel empowered all over again after being demolished by academia and all the -isms that surround our children and us within our everyday life.

**M: Some conversations about feminism in the workplace have taken up the idea of “leaning in” to ambition. How does your project intersectionally critique this normative vision of feminism?**

**CMW:** The concept of Chicana M(other)work challenges white feminism in the workplace, but specifically, in academic spaces. We ask: who has the privilege of “leaning in,” and what are they leaning on? Most of the current scholarship on academic mothers focuses on married heterosexual white women with children without any mention of intersectionality, race, or class. However, Chicana M(other)work challenges this by uplifting and validating our experiences as women

of color in graduate school and the low wages and high demands and expectations that come with being a graduate student. We speak of what often remains unspoken. We challenge the recognition and praise men get when they bring their children to work, in contrast to when we as mothers of color are seen as unprofessional when we bring our children to the workplace. We speak on the negative advice we received from some tenured mothers of color who purposely do not mention or identify publically as mothers and expect their students to similarly silence their mothering experiences. Our vision of feminism refuses to silence the care we do at home as mothers and instead embrace the intersectionalities we hold and include it in the work we do.

**M:** Can you tell us about the effects of neoliberalism on structures that impact mothers and motherwork? How does scarcity politics turn mothering into a privilege only available to some? Acts of nurturing, creating, fostering, in the context of anti-blackness and neoliberal policies, how are these acts designated privileges? How do discourses of “fitness” for motherhood fit with your project?

**CMW:** Through our own areas of expertise, we have examined the ways our community has always resisted in the face of oppression, as students, protectors of land, as cultural workers, writers, etc. Even in the most destitute of situations, marginalized and subjugated peoples have found a way to respond to their conditions. We don't believe that creativity is a privilege, in fact it is a necessity and an act of survival. We have also discussed the politics behind women of color that face fertility problems and how some might view mothering as a privilege. We acknowledge and stand next to the women of color who struggle with fertility for several reasons for which our bodies or that of our partners do not permit for mothering or even due to the lack of resources and support. While some of us can identify with those who struggle with infertility, as identified mothers, we cannot speak for their experience and can only acknowledge their struggles as another battle women of color can endure in such negative academic spaces.

Like the MOCA collective, we also hold space and acknowledge loss in motherwork. Patricia Hill Collins reminds us to remember our responsibility to our children of color. In our current moment in the context of organizing by Black Lives Matter, we stand in solidarity with the pain and loss of our Black children, men and women.

Likewise, we stand with the pain and loss of all children, mothers and fathers of color. It is our duty, as non-Black mothers of color who parent non-Black children of color, to abolish state-sanctioned violence which is rooted very specifically in anti-Blackness.

We also acknowledge that heteropatriarchy influences one's desire to have/not have children. This relates to the idea of what motherwork looks like for queer/LGBT communities. Indeed, this is prevalent for cisgender and heterosexual women as locations of reproductive justice to have agency and choice to have or not have children without shame. "Motherhood" and mothering is entangled with privileges and desires of the heteronormative patriarchy. And although most of us in this collective identify as cisgender women, not all of us identify as straight. That complexity is critical to our discourse of motherwork and our collective work. We invite the discussion around sexuality and gender presentation to also dismantle and challenge how we perceive motherwork. We believe and support anyone who desires to parent children, chooses to not have children, or performs carework in other ways. This is a reproductive justice issue.

**M:** What about single parenthood or alternative family structures. Does the scholarly community extend resources or support only to some kinds of parents? We are interested in the term "motherful" as a rejection of the "fatherless child" discourse. How can the academy support diverse kinds of families?

**CMW:** Motherful is a great concept to promulgate. We live in a society that values a certain kind of family structure that serves the neoliberal state, in which all institutions support heteronormative, two-parent households. This limiting value can be seen in the kind of families that are made visible to children in the schooling system and in the labor market where domestic life must not interfere with one's professional life. Success rests on the assumption that "someone" is taking care of the labor at home. This is blatantly true in the academy where white cisgendered men are valued and supported in ways that mothers (especially mother of color) are not. The tenure track system relies on a set of assumptions that are inherently exclusive to mothers. Parental leave policies—if they exist at all—rarely take into consideration the physical labor of producing another human being, and children are often kept in the closet. Furthermore, due to racist ideologies surrounding single Black and Brown mothers and the ways

in which they are shamed and undervalued, we feel that they are especially vulnerable within these institutions. While some universities across the United States have implemented some much-needed policies for parenting students, there is little accommodation and no standard in the field for how to support single mothers and alternative family structures, which can include adoptive parents, queer parents, and other forms of parenting.

**M:** How does the idea of meritocracy limit the production of new knowledge in the academy? What structural issues prevent departments from practicing the kinds of critiques they theorize? Do you have examples of educational spaces or policies that successfully support students from all backgrounds? Or in your experience does academia primarily reproduce class divisions?

**CMW:** Meritocracy is a myth. Yet only projects, people, and ideas that are deemed worthy of “merit” receive the kind of resources that supports their work. In this way, the academy replicates systems of oppression, which further shape and limit knowledge production. The academy manifests systems of patriarchy and colonization through classed divisions. Working-class graduate students and faculty pay the same fees for conferences and other events as their colleagues who might have more resources, including family wealth. Similarly, working-class academics who are also parents must find alternative means for childcare because so few institutions provide affordable childcare. We have yet to see an educational space that successfully supports students and faculty from all backgrounds. Instead, social capital reigns: someone gets a job because their advisor knew the head of the search committee; someone else gets a publication because one of their committee members is on the editorial board. When you can’t access, or refuse to participate in these networks, it can be hard to survive in the academy. This is why we must organize inside and outside of the institution.

**M:** Our readers include scholars in training who may benefit from understanding your experiences with microaggressions or exclusion from scholarly spaces. When a national conference denies parenting scholars child care, this should be understood as a form of structural violence, not just a resource deficit. How can academics, students, and administrators hold more space for mothers and parenting scholars in the academy?

**CMW:** Yes, absolutely we have experienced many types of institutional violence and microaggressions in academic spaces, everything from being denied basic resources such as childcare, lack of policies for parenting students, to hostility and shaming from professors and other individuals. Combined, these has a lasting and harmful impact. It is important to contextualize this as structural violence and microaggression rather than single instances.

For example, we have been shamed for our struggles as single and partnered mothers during office hours, we have been told not to bring our children to graduate seminars, there is consistently a lack of lactation spaces and childcare resources at conference spaces, most of us lack access to any childcare reimbursements through my department or institution, and I'm told not to include childcare costs on any of my budgets even though we cannot do my work without childcare. We are pushed out at both the institutional and interpersonal level, because wherever my child is not welcome, I am not welcome.

Institutions and individuals must be held accountable to this structural violence against women of color mothers which has been normalized and reproduced in the academy. We must envision and enact new ways to heal this violence and break these cycles, whether that happens at the institutional level, or in what Fred Moten calls "the undercommons" and beyond the ivory tower. For us, we have worked hard to create non-judgmental, unconditional, expansive, and loving care and support by collectively cultivating community among one another outside the walls of the institution. We communally sustain each other in ways that the institution cannot, in the ways that we have always sustained each other long before these institutions ever existed.

Most recently, we encountered a form of institutional violence at an Ethnic Studies conference space when the conference committee denied Chicana M(other)work's request for childcare. This denial was particularly hurtful because instead of taking our offer to collaborate on short and long-term childcare solutions, they denied our request based on the liability of our children's presence at the conference location. As Alexis Pauline Gumbs, one of the co-editors of *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines* (2016) reminds us, "institutions will always tell you they cannot afford you" (Gumbs, par. 11). Resources are not the issue, rather, the needs of student-parents are not prioritized. We saw many social media posts which

praised the conference, but who was missing? Who couldn't afford to be there? Why did this space exclude low-income mothers of color, even though the conference is supposed to be representative of Ethnic Studies? However, at the end of the day, it's important to remember this situation is representative of larger institutional factors that push out low-income mothers of color. We must contextualize this violence and work collectively for long-term solutions and push forward even when we are denied.

**M: What comes next for your collective?**

**CMW:** We have many long-term visions! First, we are hoping to secure a book contract for a Chicana M(other)work anthology. With the publication of the anthology, we plan to amplify the voices, lived experiences, and scholarship by and for mothers of color in academia. We refuse to be silenced or pushed out, and this book will show that our mothering is a transformative act that matters in all spaces, but most especially in the classroom. We hope that this book will be utilized by professors and students, staff at the administrative level who can take action and make policy changes for parenting students and for our communities who may not have access to higher education. In addition, we hope to continue publishing Chicana M(other)work anthologies dedicated to specific themes. We have so much to create and share: we are here to stay.

We recently had a successful crowdfunding campaign to purchase our own podcast recording equipment and software, and we plan to release podcasts on a monthly basis. Our plans for new podcast content include more interviews with mothers of color community members, elders, artists, activists, educators, scholars, entrepreneurs, and more. We believe in creating our own digital media projects and archiving our own storytelling as living histories that center the lived experiences of mothers of color.

Another dream of ours is to eventually have a sustainable, non-profit, academic center or cultural space. We also hope to collaborate with other social justice parenting groups around the U.S. and the world. We envision Chicana M(other)work as a movement to heal ourselves, each other, our children, and our communities; we hope that by uplifting the labor of motherwork, that others will join our movement and work together toward liberatory futures for us all. To that end, we expect that folks without children take up most of

the labor to make these changes happen on our behalf because, as mothers of color, are already overworked since our labor is often invisible, undervalued, and exploited. As the editors of *Revolutionary Mothering* remind us, time and energy are political resources, and we need non-parents and allies to make social change happen because children are everyone's responsibility.

### Chicana Motherwork Member Biographies

**Cecilia Caballero** was born in the San Francisco Bay Area to Mexican immigrant parents. She is currently a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Southern California in the Department of American Studies and Ethnicity. She also holds an MA from USC and BAs in English and Chicana/o Studies from UC Berkeley. Her dissertation focuses on narratives of sexuality, mothering, and spiritual activism in Chicana literature and cultural production. Her research has been supported by the Social Science Research Council, The Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, and Mellon Mays (MMUF). She is also the mother of a seven-year-old son.

**Dr. Yvette Martínez-Vu** is from San Fernando Valley, CA and received her B.A. in English Literature as well as a C.Phil. and Ph.D. in Theater and Performance Studies from UCLA. As a Mellon Mays and Ford Fellow, she completed a dissertation examining how Mexican, Chicana, and indigenous women use theatrical objects as a medium for resistance and empowerment within post-1990s performances in Mexico and the U.S. Yvette is the mother of a three-year old. Since completing her Ph.D., Yvette accepted a position as Assistant Director for UCSB's McNair Scholars Program. This position is a combination of advising, teaching, grant writing, research, and project management. She also provides freelance academic coaching and editing services for undergraduate and graduate students.

**Dr. Judi C. Pérez-Torres** is a Chicana momma to a six-year-old girl, a four-year-old boy and an almost two-year-old boy. She was born and raised in LA to immigrant parents from Mexico. Judi is the first in her family to go to college and earn a Ph.D. Judi earned her BA in Human Communication at CSU Monterey Bay and her MA and Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Department at the University of Utah. She lives in Ontario, CA. raising her three children and

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**Dr. Michelle Téllez** is a single mother to an eleven-year-old daughter and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mexican American Studies at the University of Arizona. Her areas of interest center on the ways in which gender intersects with social movements, migration, and the U.S./Mexico Border, research that helps us think about community formations across multiple borderlands including questions of identity, intersectionality and motherhood. She values public pedagogy, cultural/arts production and producing knowledge with and about communities who are creatively thriving and resisting. You can find out more about her work at: [www.michelletellez.com](http://www.michelletellez.com)

**Christine Vega** is a Ph.D. Candidate in GSE&IS at UCLA. She is proud scholar-activist merging academia, activism and spirituality. Her dissertation work focuses on Chicana Latina Ph.D. mother activism and academic acceleration. Currently, she is working with and organizing with Mothers of Color in Academia de UCLA and Chicana M(other) work. Christine is an AAHHE Fellow and has short stories, poetry, and theoretical publications about birth, pregnancy, and ceremony in UCLA's *Regeneracion Tlacuilolli* and *InterActions*. She's an artist, loves playing and learning from her 3-year old son.

For more information about the Chicana Motherwork Collective and to listen to their podcast, visit their website at: <http://chicana-motherwork.com>

## Notes

1. Journal Article Citation: “Our Labor Is Our Prayer, Our Mothering Is Our Offering”: A Chicana M(other)work Framework for Collective Resistance” in *Chicana/Latina Studies* 16:2 Spring 2017, pp. 44-75.

2. Although we use the identifier “Chicana” because we all identify as cisgender women, we also support the use of the identifier “Chicanx” to affirm varying gender identities, including transgender and gender nonconforming folks. We acknowledge our cisgender privilege, and we will continue to destabilize and dismantle the gender binary through the ways we mother our children and in all the spaces we inhabit.

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