



Transforming Borders: Chicana/o Popular Culture and Pedagogy

By Alejandra C. Elenes

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Transforming Borders: Chicana/o Popular Culture and Pedagogy contributes to transformative pedagogies scholarship by adding the voices of Chicana feminist pedagogies, epistemologies, and ontologies. C. Alejandra Elenes develops her conceptualizations of border/transformational pedagogies by linking the relationship between cultural practices, knowledge, and teaching in everyday life. She analyzes Chicana feminist cultural workers/educational actors re-imagining three Mexican figures: La Llorona (the weeping woman), the Virgen of Guadalupe, and Malintzin/Malinche as epistemological and pedagogical meanings. The three figures represent multiple meanings: traditional views on femininity, religion, and nationalist views on women, yet at the same time, feminists have re-imagined these three figures and developed counter-narratives that can offer alternatives to the traditional meanings.

In developing border/transformational pedagogies, Elenes looks at the significance of historical events, such as the creation of the Mexico-U.S. border, to understand the experiences of people of Mexican descent in the United States. She also examines oral histories of the legend of La Llorona in the Southwest, historical documents on the Spanish conquest of Mexico, and Chicana artists such as Ester Hernandez, Yolanda Lopez, Consuelo Jimenez Underwood, and Alma Lopez re-imagining of the Virgen of Guadalupe. The conflicts over the meanings of the three figures can help us understand how Chicanas have used their voices to counter economic and gender inequalities and how pedagogical practices show that cultural productions are sites where forms of domination can be contested and recreated in ways that allow for the creation of alternative identities and subjectivities.

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Bibliography

- Rank: #3355900 in Books
- Published on: 2010-11-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.40" h x .83" w x 6.41" l, 1.10 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 240 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

C. Alejandra Elenes makes an important contribution to Chicano/a studies, feminist theory, borderlands studies, and critical pedagogy in one of the first single-authored books about La Llorona, La Malinche/Malintzin, and the Virgin of Guadalupe. Rather than view these three female figures as static, authentic, or reified archetypes, Elenes uses historical and contemporary sources to document their multiple articulations and meanings within popular culture. The interdisciplinary methods and cross-disciplinary intellectual discourse-which weaves feminist theory and critical pedagogy with US third world scholarship-successfully bridges the academic apartheid that plagues education theory and practice, and in doing so Elenes illuminates why these connections are vital to educational strategies, changing communities, and contestations of domination. Drawing on the work of Chicana visual artists and theorists who re-imagine La Llorona, La Malinche/Malintzin, and the Virgin of Guadalupe as borderlands sites of gender, sexuality, race, class, and spirituality, Elenes brilliantly demonstrates how the three figures offer critical pedagogical insight for American experiences inside and outside of the classroom. She names this re-configurative and contested process, (Karen Mary Davalos, Loyola Marymount University)

Dr. Elenes constructs a marvelous tapestry that weaves together pedagogy and women's everyday experiences with the deconstruction and decolonial reimagining of La Llorona, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and Malintzin/Malinche. Her insightful analysis pushes us to examine the representations of these three figures in relationship to the production of knowledge and the formation of Chicana feminist subjectivities. *Transforming Borders* represents provocative scholarship that makes an outstanding contribution to cultural studies, gender studies, Chicana/o studies, and educational studies-a truly remarkable book. (Dolores Delgado Bernal, University of Utah)

C. Alejandra Elenes makes an important contribution to Chicano/a studies, feminist theory, borderlands studies, and critical pedagogy in one of the first single-authored books about La Llorona, La Malinche/Malintzin, and the Virgin of Guadalupe. Rather than view these three female figures as static, authentic, or reified archetypes, Elenes uses historical and contemporary sources to document their multiple articulations and meanings within popular culture. The interdisciplinary methods and cross-disciplinary intellectual discourse-which weaves feminist theory and critical pedagogy with US third world scholarship-successfully bridges the academic apartheid that plagues education theory and practice, and in doing so Elenes illuminates why these connections are vital to educational strategies, changing communities, and contestations of domination. Drawing on the work of Chicana visual artists and theorists who re-imagine La Llorona, La Malinche/Malintzin, and the Virgin of Guadalupe as borderlands sites of gender, sexuality, race, class, and spirituality, Elenes brilliantly demonstrates how the three figures offer critical pedagogical insight for American experiences inside and outside of the classroom. She names this re-configurative and contested process, "border/transformativ e pedagogies," because it is within the cultural spaces of subject-formation that personal, material, emotional, and spiritual power is created and has consequences for human action and agency. It is a book that all organizers, educators, and communities against silencing must read. (Karen Mary Davalos, Loyola Marymount University)

About the Author

C. Alejandra Elenes is associate professor of women's studies at Arizona State University.

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