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Editor's Note

Re-Membering Anzaldúa

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Abstract: Having concluded the conference, and now the compilation of its proceedings via the present volume, we may wonder—while listening to Anzaldúa's words in the epigraph—whether the conference did in fact chop Anzaldúa up into little fragments and tag each piece of her with a label? It is perhaps safe to say that we all did. However, having done so—a task which arises from an inescapably dialectical process of analyzing and synthesizing knowledge about any subject—we may now find it fruitful to use the present collection to try to re-member Anzaldúa and the rich fragments of knowledge, feeling, and sensation about her life and works all contributors gave to and took from the extraordinarily rich scholarly and transformative gathering.

... What am I? A third world lesbian feminist with Marxist and mystic leanings. They would chop me up into little fragments and tag each piece with a label.

—Anzaldúa, in *Moraga and Anzaldúa*,
1981:205

The present Special (Summer 2006) Issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* includes the proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the Social Theory Forum (STF), held on April 5-6, 2006, at UMass Boston. The theme of the conference was "Human Rights, Borderlands, and the Poetics of Applied Social Theory: Engaging with Gloria Anzaldúa in Self and Global Transformations."

Gloria Anzaldúa (1942-2004), the Chicana Lesbian-Feminist, poet, and cultural theorist, has been widely acknowledged for having made the literature of women of

color visible in the U.S. Toward this end, the conference sought to embrace Anzaldúa's poetic and imaginative social theorizing and praxis as a framework for the exploration of liberatory and transformative symbolic interactionism in self and global landscapes along and across gender, race and ethnicity, class, age, nationality, religion, sexuality, and ability borderlands.

Walking along and crossing the borderlands of our own academic disciplines, we engaged with Anzaldúa's gripping and creative talent in bridging the boundaries of academia and everyday life, self and global/world-historical reflexivity, sociology and psychology, social science and the arts and the humanities, spirituality and secularism, private and public, consciousness and the subconscious, and theory and practice. We sought to engage with Anzaldúa as a guiding (though not necessarily exclusive) theme to revisit and cross own knowledge, feeling, and sensual borderlands in

favor of humanizing self and global outcomes. Central in this dialogue was the exploration of human rights in personal and institutional terrains and their intersections with human borderlands, seeking creative and applied theoretical and curricular innovations to advance human rights pedagogy and practice on and off-campus.

Having concluded the conference, and now the compilation of its proceedings via the present volume, we may wonder—while listening to Anzaldúa’s words in the epigraph above—whether the conference did in fact chop Gloria up into little fragments and tag each piece of her with a label? It is perhaps safe to say that we all did. However, having done so—a task which arises from an inescapably dialectical process of analyzing and synthesizing knowledge about any subject—we may now find it fruitful to use the present collection to try to re-member Anzaldúa and the rich fragments of knowledge, feeling, and sensation about her life and works all contributors gave to and took from the extraordinarily rich scholarly and transformative gathering.

I am not sure if anyone will have the good fortune of reading the entire essays in this rather lengthy collection. Please do if you can. But, having read them again carefully as an editor, I think you will find the journey highly illuminating, inspiring, and fulfilling. This would, after all, involve performing what Anzaldúa called, using one of her “labels,” “the Coyolxauhqui imperative”—i.e., to put the fragments of her life and works back together and continue remembering her legacy as an integrated whole using this collection as well as many others already published or forthcoming.

AnaLouise Keating is quite right to remind us in her keynote speech to read both the first and the second halves of Anzaldúa’s life and writings, for even Anzaldúa herself had to go through such a Coyolxauhquan process of splitting and

reintegrating. After all, the transition from the notion of “borderlands” to *nepantlas* and *nepantleras*, as Keating persuasively points out, is a transition from an analytical to an integrative mode of understanding and experiencing dualisms. While we focus on the details, we need to keep in mind to re-member to go back and bridge all the elements of Anzaldúa’s message as a whole.

In my editorial journey, I tried to leave traces—as abstract at the beginning of each article—a summary statement about the contributions of each essay. Hoping that the abstracts will be conducive to encouraging a further in-depth reading of the proceedings, I thought perhaps the abstracts would also substitute, in their authors’ own words, for the need for providing further synopses of the essays in this editorial note. It would be rather unnecessary, given the authors’ own voices, for me to go into each and every significant contributions published in this collection.

However, I think it is worthwhile to draw your attention to two very interesting developments at the conference. One concerns the idea Cynthia Enloe had of having some of the students in her audience to represent and engage with her voice in the collection—a task which was kindly facilitated by Elora Chowdhury whose co-taught class on human rights (with Amy Den Ouden), was itself an important impetus for inviting Cynthia Enloe to the conference. Another highly innovative and deeply inspiring aspect of the conference was the way in which the panel initiated by Shirley Tang and co-organized by Tim Sieber, including panelists Chris Bobel, Ann Torke, and Karen Suyemoto, took a wonderful life of its own as a symposium, the evolution of which is so lucidly chronicled by the panelists themselves. This symposium of their conversations eloquently demonstrates in a very applied way, how and why Anzaldúa matters—and significantly points to the need for and the mission of the present journal itself.

Rather than making this editorial note longer, I will proceed with some important acknowledgments concerning many other facets of the STF 2006 conference—for, the following contributions were also necessary fragments of what made the experience of the conference possible.

As the STF organizing committee chair, I would like to take this opportunity to thank other committee members, Jorge Capetillo-Ponce, Glenn Jacobs, Estelle Disch, and Panayota Gounari for their enthusiastic involvement and support in making this engaging and transformative conference possible. Working with the other co-founders of the STF, Jorge and Glenn, has been a joy since the beginning of the conference series. But then, this joy multiplied many ten-folds when Estelle and Panayota joined the committee in Fall 2005—a step that tremendously contributed to further advancing the mission of the STF as a highly interactive, diverse, scholarly, and transformative project.

The STF 2006 conference on Anzaldúa was also made possible through the generous co-sponsorships (at UMass Boston) by the Department of Sociology, the Graduate Program in Applied Linguistics, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, the Department of Anthropology, the Women's Studies Program, the Honors Program, the William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black Culture, and the Department of African Studies. The STF organizing committee is highly aware and appreciative of the contributions all of the above have made to the continued success of the forum.

The conference attendees were also warmly nourished spiritually by the musical performances of the Aché Otán ensemble (including Leonor Rodriguez, Deborah Garca, Nurudafina Pili Abena, Julio Santos, and Glenn Jacobs) and by the folk songs of Corey Dolgon (Associate Professor and

Chair of Sociology at Worcester State College). Thanassis Gounaris, in Athens, Greece, designed the conference's beautiful posters and Allison Duffy, Director of Special Events at UMass Boston provided excellent support in arranging the logistics of the conference space. Sherry Williams and Lena Serpa in the office of the Sociology Department provided valuable assistance in managing various pre- and post-conference tasks. The graduate students of sociology, Heather Eddy and Jennifer Pfordresher, did a superb job attending the table of the event during both days, and contributing to a lively and inviting atmosphere at the conference; for this, and previous allocations of graduate student assistantships, the STF organizing committee appreciates the contributions of the Graduate Program in Applied Sociology at UMass Boston. STF organizing committee also appreciates the student-run *Wit's End* café at UMass Boston for nourishing the conference attendees throughout the two days.

I think if it was not for the intensive state of fluid living in the borderlands of intellectual curiosity, emotional passion, and hard labor, neither the conference, nor its proceedings, nor in fact the whole of the Social Theory Forum as an ongoing annual conference series, could have materialized. Transcending the rigid borderlands of research, teaching, and service in the spirit of professional nepantla activism is the secret behind the continued success of the Social Theory Forum as an innovative and cross-disciplinary scholarly project.

For further information about the purpose and mission of the Social Theory Forum, please see the backmatter of this volume. From this volume on, the proceedings of the STF conference series will be published as special theme issues of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*. The recent conference on Anzaldúa followed two previous annual meetings of the STF held April in 2004 and

2005. The theme of the first and second annual meeting were, respectively, “Liberating Social Theory: Inspirations from Paulo Freire in Learning, Teaching, and Advancing Social Theory in Applied Settings,” and “Theories and Praxes of Difference: Revisiting Edward Said in the Age of New Globalizations.”

Having guest-edited the proceedings of the previous two meetings—published as two separate double-issues of the journal, *The Discourse of Sociological Practice* (founded by Siamak Movahedi, Professor and Chair of Sociology at UMass Boston)—I can attest to the solid continuity and the progressive deepening and realization of the mission of the annual STF conference series. The transition of the STF proceedings to finding a home in *Human Architecture*, beginning with the present collection devoted to Gloria Anzaldúa, could not have been more timely, for her life and works best exemplify highly imaginative, effective, and liberating approaches to the mission of this journal and the research center of which it is a part:

Don't give me your lukewarm gods. What I want is an accounting with all three cultures—white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of the entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—una cultura mestiza—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture.

—Gloria Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 44

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