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May 10, 2021

Dear Drs./Editors Samuel Keast, Rachael Fox, Mohi Rua and Christopher Sonn,

Thank you for your leadership in overseeing the editorial process for the special issue “Fostering and sustaining transnational solidarities for transformative social change: Advancing community psychology research and action” in the *American Journal of Community Psychology*.

We value the opportunity to submit our manuscript, *Dissident Women: Letter Writing as Decolonial Inquiry toward Relational Solidarities of Epistemic Justice and Desire* for review and consideration into the special issue. Grounded in a decolonial feminist praxis, our paper engages how various social actors, and communities challenge structural violence, oppression, inequity, and social, racial, and epistemic injustice. We thread these reflections through our written words, in subversive letters which we offer in the form of a written relational dialogue: a plurilogue that emerges in response to our specific locations, commitments, and refusals, as well as dissents. Our stories and process of dissent within the various locations, relationships, and contexts that we occupy served as the yarn and needle that threads our stories, our posed questions, and reflections. Our plurilogue of dissent offers a view to advance community research and action towards goals of liberation, decoloniality, and community wellness.

Our paper abides by APA format standards, and it has not been submitted elsewhere. We have crafted this manuscript with the intention to contribute to the special issue you're leading. The current manuscript is 40 pages, and approximately 11,900 words in length.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require additional information. We look forward to your thoughts and reflections on our manuscript, which has been a labor of love and dissent in relationality and accompaniment with each other. We welcome your thoughts and feedback, and hope this will make a meaningful contribution to the themes of the special issue.

Sincerely,
Jesica S. Fernández, Santa Clara University

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**Dissident Women: Letter Writing as Decolonial Inquiry toward Relational Solidarities
of Epistemic Justice and Desire**

AUTHOR 1

AUTHOR 1 INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

AUTHOR 2

AUTHOR 1 INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

AUTHOR 3

AUTHOR 1 INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

AUTHOR 4

AUTHOR 1 INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

Abstract

Braiding our words, “dissi-dance,” and desires, this paper sought to engage how various social actors, and communities—which we are a part of and belong to—challenge structural violence, oppression, inequity, and social, racial, and epistemic injustice. We thread these reflections through our written words, in subversive letters which we offer in the form of a written relational dialogue: a plurilogue that emerges in response to our specific locations, commitments, and refusals, as well as dissents. Our stories and process of dissent within the various locations, relationships, and contexts that we occupy served as the yarn and needle that threads our stories, our posed questions, and reflections. Braiding, threading and weaving together, we animate deep decolonial inquiries within ourselves and our different cultural contexts and countries. Refusing individualism, refusing illusions of objectivity as distance, refusing the academic as expert and refusing the exile of affect and emotion on academic pages, we choose to occupy academic writing and ask: *What if academic writing were stitched with blood and laughter, relationships and insights, rage and incites? What if, at the nexus of critical psychology and decolonizing feminism, grew “evidence based embodied praxis?”* Unlike academic writing, designed to camouflage affect, pain, connection, relationality and subjectivity, these letters are unapologetically saturated in care and wisdom – embodied evidence. Our plurilogue of dissent offers a view to advance community research and action towards goals of liberation, decoloniality, and community wellness.

Keywords: dissidence, letters, epistemic justice, aesthetic awakening, oral histories, decolonial *mujerista* and womenist psychologies

**Dissident Women: Letter Writing as Decolonial Inquiry toward Relational Solidarities
of Epistemic Justice and Desire**

“Dissent is verbal resistance. It is the affirmation of our voices, of our worth.

...And, in fact, dissent is not unrelated to love. ...speaking love is an act of dissent.” (Carolina De Robertis, 2017, p. 7; In *Radical Hope: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times*)

Dear AUTHOR 1, AUTHOR 2, AUTHOR 4 and MASKED,

Reading each of your letters did give a feeling of being wrapped in an affirming shawl. It was one among those few moments when I felt that I did not only use my eyes to read the words written but also with my whole heart and body. English is my third language. My mother tongue is bahasa Jawa (Javanese language). It is the language I speak in any context other than those that require formality, like at work, where I have to use Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian official language). So, with English and Bahasa Indonesia, I tend to feel that there is a sense of distance between these languages and myself. Therefore, with English or Bahasa Indonesia, I tend to feel that I speak and write mainly with my head. It is when using Bahasa Jawa that I tend to feel more cognitively and affectively connected to what I speak. However, it was not the case with reading your letters and writing mine. It felt as if I spoke and wrote in Bahasa Jawa.

Thank you. Terima kasih.

AUTHOR 3

Oh, querida comadrta AUTHOR 2, your writing is always a testimonio of deep wisdom and love. It felt like pushing aside everything else to joyfully run

to the mailbox and desperately open the long-desired letter that has magical power for our craving souls. In gratitude for continuing to ignite our most invigorating desires to co-create the otherwise.

Abrazos,

AUTHOR 4

An Introductory Prelude to Our Epistolary Plurilogue

Letter writing is a long and luscious practice of/by/for dissident women; a typically private exchange of love, pain, stories, struggles, desires and longings. The intimacies of letters can launch movements, as private details seep into public space, catalyzing political possibilities that speak structural truths and taunt dominant narratives. We are reminded of *Letters of a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs* (Lyons, 2007) and Smith-Rosenberg's 1975 essay, *The Female World of Love and Ritual*, drawing from diaries and correspondence among intimate women in 19th century United States. We remember *Letters from Mothers to Daughters and Daughters to Mothers* edited by Tillie Olsen (1993), weaving 120 writers of prose and poetry crafting intimate pieces passed between generations, and are moved by Gio Swaby's recent exhibition at the Claire Oliver Gallery, [*Both sides of the Sun*](#) framed as a love letter to Black women's style and aesthetics. In 2019, more than 200 Latinx actors, activists, civil rights and labor leaders published [*Querida Familia Letter*](#), in the *New York Times*, that opens with: "If you are feeling terrified, heartbroken and defeated by the barrage of attacks on our community, you are not alone." The tradition of letter writing is pointed and relational, an affective and collective capillary that entwines us across time and space. Powerful and clearly outside the canon of academic social science discourse. Until now.

Across media, time frame, historic context, a woman writes to woman/women, mothers to daughters, daring to speak into the world words/stories/*testimonios*/images held in

the heart, chest, soul, too dangerous to be spoken but in need of release. Audre Lorde (1984) may have captured our practice as “erotic”:

[the] erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling. In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various source of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change. (p. 53)

So let us assume letters are erotic – unleashing power of unexpressed feelings.

Letters have been primarily, but not only (see Ta-nehisi Coates’ letter to his son, *Between the World and Me*, 2015), a practice by/for/with those who identify as women. Perhaps as women it has been/is always too dangerous to speak aloud what we are thinking, feeling, and holding, but a letter escapes when passions refuse to be contained. When “our insides jump, even as we may appear still” as AUTHOR 3 told us during one of our writing/reflecting meetings. Letters are penned in the ink of affect, pain, longing, connection; drafted for an audience, with a purpose and unapologetic intent. Once they sail out into the world, the writers can’t control the response, the receipt or the reverberations. The release is thrilling and anxiety gathers until we hear how/if they land.

We stand on the sweet and worn shoulders of women who dared to write – trans and cis, highly educated and barely, mothers who tucked notes into children’s lunch boxes, girls who wrote on bathroom walls. Those who came before and wrote before. These letters too often die with the women who receive, or they have been lost to his-story, erased/ignored, treated as if too messy or sentimental or the contents not “rigorous.”

Letters stand in bold and bodacious contrast to academic writing. As Mik Billig in *Learning to Write Badly* (2013), and Sandra Harding in *Situated Knowledge* (1988) would argue, the voice of the academic scholarship is militantly singular and passive. We learn to narrate from a God’s eye view, a view from nowhere; we are disciplined to extract the word

I, remove all sticky traces of affect, erase clues of relationship and delete words that may reveal our desires or commitments. We worry this is what passes for “appropriate” social science academic writing; “evidence based”; no audience, no heartbeat; accountable to no one; form pre-determined; a pile of evidence designed to prove/convince “what is” rather than a gesture and embrace to provoke a sense of what else is possible, how might things be otherwise. We seek to decolonize academic writing in psychology so it has a pulse.

In this article we stitch fiercely a series of letters we have written to each other, after we re-viewed our [MASKED LINK](#) video from the 8th International Congress on Community Psychology (ICCP) conference panel on *Creating Inclusive Cultures and Healthy Communities*, where we shared our activist community-based inquiries nourished in solidarity with movements for justice and where we curated a transnational conversation that nourished what Della V. Mosley, Helen Neville and others (2020) call “radical hope” – the courage to forge inquiries *with* communities in struggle, and never *on*. Unlike academic writing, designed to camouflage affect, pain, connection, relationality and subjectivity, these letters are unapologetically saturated in care and wisdom – embodied evidence. In the spirit of dissident women, in this article, AUTHOR 1, AUTHOR 3, AUTHOR 4 and AUTHOR 2 have written letters to each other, *not outside the genre of academic writing, but within*.

With these letters we drench a journal in the affects, solidarities, disappointments, rage, laughter and connections we embody alongside community-based struggles – our sites of activist research – and with each other. We publish these musings, so they may endure over time. Refusing individualism, refusing illusions of objectivity as distance, refusing the academic as expert and refusing the exile of affect and emotion on academic pages, we choose to occupy academic writing and ask: *What if academic writing were stitched with blood and laughter, relationships and insights, rage and incites? What if, at the nexus of critical psychology and decolonizing feminism, grew “evidence based embodied praxis?”*

A word about “absences.” As you might have noticed, in our original conference panel, we were joined by sister/friend/colleague MASKED. Our ideas entangled with hers. While she is not an official “author,” her wisdom sits on these pages, even if she could not find the time to write with us. That is we include MASKED as a sister-in-inquiry, as she was with us at the conference where our words and maybe tears embraced. When we decided to co-author an article, MASKED responded – with regret – that she could not write now. And yet our *insights* and our *incites* are entangled as she prioritized carework and other fights: caring for students, family, and community; resisting institutionalized whiteness and its myriad manifestations; contending with unfathomable trauma, loss, and rage in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic in India.

Across contexts and rooted in a decolonial feminist praxis, we write to and with each other, through emotion, connections, passions and vulnerabilities, across nation states and oceans, about inquiries launched in feminist solidarity *between* academics and communities in struggle. We enact a collective, decolonizing feminist epistemic bricolage. This time we will not allow the herstories of “evidence based embodied praxis” to be erased by masculinist voice-overs. We document the resonances of oppression, resistance and love that shimmer across the Global North and Global South, and we share our letters with you, archived in this journal, as a cross-generational gift for critical psychologists yet to come.

We begin this process, however, first in honor and in remembrance of the long history of decolonial feminist letter writing, specifically of *Kartini’s* letters in radical times of dissent, resistance and revolution – times of a past with relevance for today and tomorrow.

Grounding Our Process, Honoring *Kartini’s* Letters

Fostering solidarity and radically inclusive imaginaries was the yearning and question that brought us together into a series of dissident conversations during and beyond the ICCP conference. Echoing the iconic quote from philosopher Maxine Greene, conversations may

not change the world, but conversations may change the ways *we* think about *our world*. In the case of Indonesia, such a provocative conversation was embodied in the figure of *Kartini*, a woman who ignited the Indonesian women emancipation movement through the subversive letters she wrote for her allies both in the colonized Indonesia and the Netherlands. Through these letters, she contested the oppressive systems of her lifetime in the colonial era of Indonesia: Western colonization, Javanese feudalism, patriarchy, racism and sexism that had perpetuated the subjugation of women of color. Her birthdate, April 21, is celebrated as the Indonesian Women's Day, and it was also the month when we were preparing this article.

From *Kartini*, we learned how personal letters were used as a political pamphlet for amplifying subversive voices silenced/repressed/condemned by the ruling powers. Written between 1899 and 1904, *Kartini's* letters documented her correspondence with her comrades in which she exposed various forms of discriminations prevailing in her society (Coté, 1992). The letters also voiced her resistance against the imposing supremacy maintained by colonialism, feudalism, and sexism (Kartini, 1992, 2005). Her letters were also the megaphones she used for advocating women's liberation, particularly, through equal access for education, which during her lifetime was a radical inclusive imaginary no one dared to think of.

Kartini's letters were a pathway of consciousness rising and solidarity for her Dutch comrades, as well as the generations of Indonesian women's movement activists. It was her privilege as an aristocratic woman that afforded her an opportunity to access a Dutch elementary school from which she learned the language of the colonizer. During the colonial era, such a schooling system was created by the Dutch to produce low rank colonial administrations. Instead of obeying this design, *Kartini* occupied the language of the colonizer to advocate for the liberation of her society. So dangerous were her letters that various forms of censorships were found in its publications (Bijl & Chin, 2020).

Not only her letters that were censored, but even worse, there was a period in the Indonesian post-colonial history when *Kartini's* historical contributions to her nation were also profoundly distorted. Such a distortion particularly occurred during the New Order era (1965-1998) when Indonesia was governed by a militaristic regime that was culturally sustained by a patriarchal system that glorified the roles of male figures in both public and domestic spheres. During this period, *Kartini's* heroism was mainly represented around her domestic roles as a devoted wife and mother (Bijl & Chin, 2020). Her political letters and voice were hardly mentioned in any historical textbooks learned in schools. Instead, schools often obliged female students to participate in traditional fashion shows and cooking competitions to commemorate *Kartini's* birthdate. Her provocative letters gradually disappeared from people's historical awareness, as did her courageous political agency. Consequently, the name of *Kartini* became a symbol of unquestioned complicity to the discriminatory, sexist social systems prevailing in the Indonesian society; the very system against which *Kartini* set her long-life struggle.

Kartini, and the historical background to her life, inspired and affirmed for us the power of letter writing for fostering solidarity and radically inclusive imaginaries. Having the opportunity to present *Kartini's* history in this article is an opportunity to reignite her political legacies. In another words, to re-center her provocative awakening which like many other dissident women's voices are often seen as a threat or a dangerous noise that must be or is therefore often silenced, condemned, or willfully forgotten, set aside/outside the *status quo*. We join *Kartini* in this practice of dissent through our letters.

Four Letters on Dissident Radical Solidarities, Love and Refusal

And so, we watched the [MASKED LINK](#) video of our conversation, and instead of writing separate sections, we dedicated ourselves to writing letters, to each other, stitching our work into each other's projects.

Queridas compañeras, AUTHOR 2, AUTHOR 3, AUTHOR 4 and MASKED,

I am inclined to begin this letter as I have been starting most of my emails and correspondence these days, wishing that you and your loved ones are healthy, well and cared for. I mean it every time I write it, and I am also desperately wanting to embrace each of you because so much has unfolded in varied ways over the past year or more, that I long for that physical connection that can only be experienced when in the embodied material presence of a dear long missed friend, sister, mother, grandmother, *mujer*, *compañera* – *nosotras*.

I have been piecing together this letter over the past days, trying to discern how to best begin to describe what I want to share with you. And how listening to your voices – the plurilogue of threaded words and reflections nearly six months after ICCP – still evokes for me what AUTHOR 2 described as an “aesthetic awakening.” More than an aesthetic awakening, I would characterize our plurilogue multi-vocal intersectional dialogue (Einola et al., 2020), and the connections and links we have continued to cultivate since then, as human and humanizing risings! Waking up feels passive to me, but *rising* – rising with the sun, rising with the blooming greeneries and colors of spring, rising with the waves and tides of trembling waters that clash and settle back. Your words then and now, and this friendship, *comadrerismo*, evokes for me a human/humanizing rising, as well as a response to the assemblages of violence both within and outside the discipline, the academy, the locations, places and spaces wherein we are situated and often (mis)placed by others – those who shape and contort the/their power to structure the lives of the others, yet fail to embrace mutual reciprocal recognitions.

Nosotras, the we and them, and the us, is a word that surfaced for me as I listened to our ICCP panel dialogues. *Nosotras*, which Gloria E. Anzaldúa describes as a linking expression of communality, mutuality, interconnections and reciprocal human recognition, *al estilo Fanon*, I believe is what we cultivated in our panel. And, what we strive to sow, till and

grow among the communities wherein our collaborative actions-in-practice, the named research, unfolds and flows. As I reflected on the powerful stories, provocations and words of dissent, resistance and refusal you all shared, I felt a connection to each of you as there was so much fullness in what you generously offered and provoked!

From the Miya poetry that spoke to refusal and resistance from erasure – and which reminded me of my adolescent years learning English through writing poetry I pieced together in *Spanglish*, my third language. Poetry helped me find and connect with my voice as I became silent and silenced in school. Poetry, as you well described, MASKED, heals. Poetry was a move, a way for me to dance with others, peers and students, and share and connect especially with those who saw me as academically disengaged and deficient.

Walking through the journey of my younger self then led me to reflect on AUTHOR 3's words, especially the importance of *vivir con proposito*, to live with a purpose. AUTHOR 3 described how social care is fundamental to the Javanese cultural ethic of being of service to and with others. Specifically, of the importance of being acknowledged and recognized, as well as provided with opportunities to express and engage in the capacity to contribute to communities. To engage in social care, in a meaningful, authentic and relational way, is to live with purpose, intention and direction toward the betterment of communities, and society. This cultural value of importance and significance among Javanese communities, especially the disability community, affirms for me what my parents raised my siblings and I to practice consistently: *vivir para servir*. This loosely translates into "live to serve;" however it is not intended to mean or be interpreted as charitable service or volunteerism in some form of voyeurism or a savior complex. On the contrary, it is about utilizing the privilege, resources, access and leverages at our disposal – the tools, antidotes, disruptions, and strategies – within our complex positionalities of power, privilege and reach/research to support, transform and

wield what is within our institutions or settings toward the interests, needs and desires of communities who may invite, welcome and call upon us, in their own ways of being, to unite.

La union hace la fuerza, in unity there is strength; and it is in this commUNION of radical relational solidarities, which you each described, that I was also reminded of the importance of holding multiplicity, pluriversality and complexity, as not only a metaphor for a beautiful tapestry of *saberes entrettejidos* (threaded knowledge), but a necessary *rebozo* (shawl) to cloak us from the singularity, the narrowness and hegemony that often constitute, and continues to circulate within and outside of the academe. AUTHOR 4's journey into the voices of decolonial scholars from the Majority World that have contributed to decoloniality and decolonization affirms the expansiveness of knowledge, of *cosmovisiones* (cosmovisions) and *realidades* (realities) that are otherwise. *Pachamama* is us, *nosotras*. How we care for ourselves cannot be detached from how we care for our earth, and all non-human beings. Once more, I am reminded of the interlacing threads and bonds that hold us together, that sustain communities across tides of tension, and across generations, land, and dimensions.

To the youth that are witnessing and contesting the violence of this very moment – from *la Selva Lacandona*, the rivers near the Beki river in Lower Assam, to the urban and rural streets in protest affirming Black Lives Matter, as do the lives of those whom are perceived as sub-human or lacking because of how our societies have hegemonically constructed what it means to be an “able-bodied” being. Indeed, from student activists organizing to decolonize the university to elementary, middle and high school youth calling for “police free schools.” The youth, advocates, poets, and formerly incarcerated women – they are the vanguard of change. In the jungle and river valleys, in the classroom, and at home and in the streets, they carry the torch to light and agitate for institutional change. And from here, from where I stand as an educator, accomplice and ally to dissenters and resisters,

especially youth activists organizing within the neoliberal university, and from whom I learn to co-organize/strategize, they keep the embers of my daydreaming and imaginations alive and radically hopeful.

What would our lives be without the capacity to imagine, dream? What is lost by the death of envisioning and seeing, and therefore sensing in the soul-flesh-heart, something transformatively different from what is? The loss and death of freedom, and the struggle to claim, demand and fight for it. AUTHOR 2's experience with incarcerated women whose dreams of another reality are foreclosed by the limited opportunities to imagine, to dream and envision their lives apart, away and outside of where they are confined leads me to conclude that perhaps – or most surely – the greatest disruption we can have, wield and leverage is that of cultivating a radical revolutionary imagination to dream! Dare communities in struggle dream, and bring into being the world and conditions they strive and must exist in. It is not a matter of deservingness, of who can or should earn their freedoms from the chains of the carceral state, but rather a recognition that emancipation and emancipatory praxes, like decolonial dreaming and imaginings, radical relational solidarities, and pluriversalities are some strategic moves that can lead to collective liberation.

Collectively the dialogues among *nosotras* that surfaced through this panel, underscore the urgencies and possibilities of epistemic transformative justice in action and practice. And, I add, across multiple-levels – from the relational and communal, to the structural, political and cosmological – as well as domains and mediums, such as poetry, organizing, advocacy, stories, and policies. What I humbly offered in this letter are *sentir-pensamientos*, feeling/sensing-thoughts, that I describe as reflections on the kinds of “moves” I, we, *nosotras*, engage in as we pursue and engage consistently in dissident acts. In the dissidence – the dizzy daring double-dutch *doblepaso* dance – of disrupting hegemonic power, deconstructing coloniality and colonialism, and unsettling all that must not be nor

continue to structure communities and lives: the racism, sexism, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, and more beyond naming.

Each of you, AUTHOR 3, AUTHOR 4, AUTHOR 2 and MASKED, through your praxis, ways of knowing and being, as well as relating, reflecting and responding to the assemblages of violence, the amalgamation of oppressive power, remind me of, and in my humble view, exemplify what Gloria E. Anzaldúa described as “spiritual activism.” In the words of Anzaldúa (2003), spiritual activism is:

With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the precious-ness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings—*somos todos un país*. Love swells in your chest and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything. . . .

You share a cate-gory of identity wider than any social position or racial label. This *conocimiento* motivates you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean—to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing. (p. 558)

The work of love, of heart-soul, that you each engage in with and within your respective communities and contexts affirm for me that the spiritual activism that Anzaldúa described is not only possible but desperately necessary if we are to radically imagine and therefore create otherwise, and anew more humane and transformative just conditions in communities and collectives in the present, and with and for generations to come. Let us then continue in this rEVOLution where we sign on to embracing and enacting dissent as an imperative to decolonial liberation.

Abrazos,

AUTHOR 1

Dear MASKED, AUTHOR 1, AUTHOR 3 and AUTHOR 4,

As I write I want to bathe in and also think critically about the kinds of transnational solidarities we breathe, bend toward, struggle to sustain, cherish. As I sat to write this letter, looking for where to begin, I was reminded of a story about knitted caps in detention centers, that my friend/colleague/activist Andrea Juarez Mendoza told me. As a doctoral student/translator/researcher, Andrea traveled, with a legal watchdog group, to Dilley detention camp in Texas, where she met and translated with/for/alongside women and children seeking asylum, originally from Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala... There she witnessed sweet and bold solidarities nourished in hell. As some refugee women and children were leaving, and others staying, weeping/smiling/confused/holding hands across borders of state violence, those who were leaving wore the small caps of green and brown that the collective of women knit. And all sang, "*Si una se queda, todas nos quedamos. Si una se va, todas nos vamos.*" "If one of us stays, we all stay. If one of us leaves, we all leave." (personal communication, 2018, see also Mendoza, A. J. *A Nepantlera in the Academy: Sowing Seeds con El Hilo*, forthcoming).

I wonder about the radical solidarities we stitch together and the knitted caps we wear when we are working in/with/alongside communities of struggle, and where we place our caps when we enter the academy. These questions of transnational solidarities hatched in struggle, and then sustained across place/time/movements/writing/poetry/praxis, sit at the heart of my letter to you.

Sister/friends... As I listened to our [MASKED LINK](#) at the conference, I felt a soft shawl of knowledge/love-soaked inquiry draped across a sprawling we: a collective of activists/poets/journalists/storytellers/researchers and teachers of the Miya community situated in the borderlands of Northeastern India to youth and families of children with disabilities in rural Indonesia to Lacandon youth activists fighting for the rainforest in

Chiapas to immigration justice youth activists in San Diego, and with frayed edges the shawl reaches deep into a women's prison in New York State.

This shawl of epistemic justice, held by our 10 hands and many more, embraced the spaces where we each sit with/listen to/resist alongside/hold sacred and nourish counter storytelling, in the language of MASKED. Together we bend toward emancipatory ethics as AUTHOR 3 speaks through disability justice and calls for a radical commitment to *silaturahmi* – to chat beside without pre-determined diagnoses. We are indebted to the stunning critical ancestry AUTHOR 4 narrated, grounded in Indigenous epistemologies of the South, so that we may make the road [together] by walking otherwise. AUTHOR 4 beckoned us to envision pluriversals, drawn by wisdom and epistemes of the Global South, engaged by the ethical and political obligations to humans and non-humans, building an ecology of non-capitalist solidarities.

Not surprising, but nourishing, we all spoke of love and our inquiries forged “with.” Each of us speaks/writes to challenge dominant and dehumanizing policies, practices, ideologies, enactments of state violence aimed at marginalized groups, people with disabilities, outsiders, insiders excluded within and the earth as we “perforate the official archive” (thank you MASKED), sit beside and refuse to intervene (thank you AUTHOR 3), and offer up stories long silenced and buried (thank you AUTHOR 4). We animated our attempts to reveal the connective tissue of suffering, resistance and history to structural violence, dignity, and desire (thank you AUTHOR 1), even as we acknowledged that we labor in deeply contradictory spaces drenched in/threatened by neoliberalism, white supremacy, racial capitalist logics – otherwise called the academy. And throughout our sistertalk, across time zones and on distinct lands all trembling with state violence, racial capitalism, neoliberalism, environmental crises, and the relentless assaults of hetero-patriarchy, we were held/listened to/reflected back and encouraged by the activist scholar

spirit of AUTHOR 1. *We knit caps of a different sort, and we invented a grammar for liberatory praxis.*

Since that evening, and again since the watching, at odd moments, I can feel your smile, AUTHOR 4, float across my screen and into my heart. This morning as I was walking with my 17-month-old grandbaby Rosie to the park, I tried to imagine how you sit, AUTHOR 3, beside families of children with disabilities, particularly at a moment of COVID-19, isolation, separation, and what comfort you must convey. And whenever I turn on the news and hear a Republican declare that January 6 insurrectionists were patriots, seared into my soul are MASKED's words: "Majoritarian stories rely upon strategic forgetting."

That morning/evening/afternoon, we held each other, as we have accompanied our projects and co-conspirators, co-researchers and comrades, as I imagine we try to curate "holding environments" (thank you Winnicott) with our students. In these enactments of fragile-aries (not so solid), we knit pluriversity, public shared space where knowledges from the ground up filled our hearts and provoked us to imagine what else is possible.

Across our brief "tapas" of presentations, I could hear exquisite care and attention to the local, and an insistence on contesting the dominant gaze and violence on Miya, on families of children with disabilities in Indonesia, and those who love and live in the rainforests in south America. I could hear demands for epistemic justice, appreciating the words/actions/poetry/sensing and feeling of those so generous to welcome us into their struggles. Together we wondered aloud – to whom/with whom/for whom do we write?; to whom and with whom do we sit, alongside, in silence?; how do we document the knowledge and practices already woven over generations by communities of struggle and survival, resistance and desire; what do we want to keep sacred and what might we speak back, to psychology and the academy, about the spaces/poetry/struggles seeping into our bodies. I felt

warm and held by the connections stitched across, and laden with the weight of questions of accountability, provocation, and transformation across our varied sites of practice.

I am at once interested in the fragile and deliberate solidarities that Andrea found at the border, and the very different but also fragile and deliberate solidarities we forge across the academy as we dismantle illusions of objectivity and expertise, pierce the membrane between academic knowledge and the knowledge of struggle, culture, desire marinating on the ground in communities and lands under siege. And so for comfort, I turned to an old intellectual friend, French political theorist Chantal Mouffe, to think about how we might always honor the historic and current particulars of the local, and yet also makes visible the capillaries of oppression and resistance, struggle and joy, that travel across. Mouffe calls these “chains of equivalence”:

I am not talking about abandoning particular forms of struggle. But when we talk about collective will, we will inevitably create some contradictions. That is politics. The chain of equivalence is about mobilizing people together through their different struggles—we call this a convergence of struggles. And creating a bond between those struggles in a way that recognizes the specificities of different struggles but also fiercely recognizing the commonalities and solidarities among the various struggles. (December 13, 2016, *The Nation*)

And so, I giggle to imagine that we too don knitted caps sitting atop our heads somewhere in the cyber-cloud above Melbourne (Australia) even as we commit to inquiry forged with movements for land and cultural dignity, disability justice, the earth, and for prison abolition.

Before closing, I pose a set of troubling questions for us to ask ourselves and each other, and our students, for the rest of our lives:

On the *neoliberal academy*: I wonder if/that the university is worthy.

On *audience*: To whom do we speak/write/engage poetry, spirituality, theory, aesthetic provocation?

On *solidarities*: I wonder if you, at times, feel like when you write, in your publications, you are simply translating – with ethics and strategic refusals – the wisdom and counter stories of communities, blessed and cursed with invisibility, to centers of power refusing to listen/feel/respect.

On *gendered violence*: I wonder – how is it possible – in every context we sit, accompany, we hear whispers of gendered violence – how do we understand that bloody stream of social life predictable across land/nation/class, and why are we always surprised?

On *wounds*: I wonder how we speak of the suffering and wounds without taking up and reproducing a damage centered narrative, and how do we refuse the conflation of resistance/survival as if this were justice.

On *privilege*: I wonder why we don't conduct ethnographies of privilege to reveal the deeply unjust accumulations of power, wealth, control and the enactments of exploitation.

On *building communities* in hell: I wonder how we continue to build living/loving communities of sensing and feeling in institutions of state violence.

I wonder when we will be able to hug...

Sending you sweet thoughts, friends.

AUTHOR 2

Dear AUTHOR 1, AUTHOR 2, AUTHOR 3, and MASKED,

...we will continue pursuing our denunciations to the national and international levels [in such forums] as the UN [United Nations] and OAS [Organization of American States] about the violation of human rights, and we will continue to denounce the violations to our human rights as indigenous pueblos. And that we do not want to continue being used as booty in election

campaigns that profit from our poverty. We are in solidarity with the struggle that is being developed by our *compañeras* in the Yacaltecas Union of Women for their respect of their free determination in the election of their own authorities and the defense of communitarian institutions [traditional indigenous communal structures] (“Weaving in the Spaces,” p. 139).

...We started with about fifty women and girls and we were able to officially constitute ourselves and start to get support. We were called Te Gunaa Ruinchi Laadi [Women who Weave]. This group still exists (“Indigenous Women’s Activism in Oaxaca and Chiapas,” p. 168). (In Speed et al., 2006, *Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas*).

I tried to weave my feelings and thoughts after reading your loving and encouraging letters and my clumsy reply, incapable of articulating the soulful *movimiento* in my heart. I sat in front of my computer screen just feeling, allowing mis *lágrimas* to speak on my behalf. I did not mind if my audience speaks Spanglish or not, disregarding the need for imposed translation in the monolingual empire, and avoiding academic language. AUTHOR 1, you gave me the necessary courage. Your powerful words invite us to continuously dismantle the empire, the hegemonic academy, troubling the status quo *comadreando*. You ignite my enthusiasm with love and courage para *seguir caminando*.

I feel at home with you, dissident women who are “weaving in the spaces” from *muchos lugares*. I feel deep joy and permission to confide what is brewing in my heart and migrant flesh. *Comadre/compañera* AUTHOR 3, you dare us to rethink our positionalities in the hegemonic academy while committing to work with our communities with ethical accountability. I would like to share how painful it was to enter the academy in foreign lands trapped in-between languages, misrepresentations, pretensions, jargons, discriminations, insecurities, and equivocations. My parents wanted me to be educated in the global North. I

had to learn a different language and practice a new walk. Because of my short legs, I always had to catch up. There was never time, I always had to run. No matter how hard I tried, I was gazed as an uneducated, sensual, and exotic woman in search for a European husband, a home, financial security, a fake reputation, and so on. But more than anything, I was expected to become fully white, to speak the European language without accent, to cover my *pecas* (freckles) and stay away from the sun. International government grants covered the costs of my education and required secured return to my “salvaged land.” I was expected to teach others what I learned in their “civilized land” in order to promote progress and modernization. But it was a total failure. The conviviality with the Indigenous communities forged my deep admiration for their knowledge and ethical relationality with nature. It was hard to unlearn the lies of the West but as many dissident women declare, we must dare!

We come from various grounds but weaving in spaces we become aware of the pervasive colonial difference in our daily lives. It is not the same to enunciate injustice from the social struggle as it is to write about it in the academe. We know because we have been in both places. I cannot stop the inner struggle, the deep conflict, the constant question: “What am I doing in the ivory tower? Have I lost my way home to *el otro lado*, where *nuestras comunidades* speak a different language? I want to *palabrandar* with them, walking and weaving insurrect words, making roads otherwise, *sentipensando* in affective conviviality with them. Asking day after day, where are the meeting points of solidarity in our struggles for liberation? How can we conspire in the belly of the beast, the hegemonic academy and its institutions, to dismantle the pervasive racism, heteronormativity, ableism, white supremacy, decapitating the capitalist hydra, mobilizing resources, and finally ending the epistemic and political ignorance and lies written in academic textbooks? How can we manifest decolonial imagination into transformative embodied action? We must ask many questions because in

times of trouble it is not about finding the right answers but constantly questioning what is taken for granted. It is about finding ruptures that create systemic dysfunction.

During the time I spent in affective conviviality with the Lacandón communities in the Sacred Rainforest of Chiapas, I witnessed in awe her powerful and rhythmic song, constantly reminding us of the insignificance of human existence. The Anthropocene diluted in her loving presence, permeating every breath, every pulse, and body movement with her rich biodiversity. There I understood her ancestral wisdom *con corazonar* as Indigenous knowledges can only be deeply comprehended with our hearts. For Indigenous cosmovisions, the Earth is testimony of the right for life. But this right is differently understood in the global discourse of universal human rights conceived by and for whites.

Comadre/compañera AUTHOR 2, you stir trouble raising the demands and solidarities of courageous incarcerated women against their brutal confinement that is only possible in the systemic decadence we continue to live. You teach us how these women survive the violent attack of abuse and claustrophobic coloniality in their solidary resistance against the capitalist hydra and its required weapons such as, racism, patriarchy, xenophobia, pathological greediness, emptiness, alienation, and despair. You courageously accompany them demanding the end of violence against them and their children. Their powerful stories forever tattooed their feminine, sacred power in *nuestras almas*: Yes, we can – *si se puede!*

Three dissident women from Abya Ayala, Yuderkis Espinosa, Dina Gomez, and Karina Ochoa shared in their work entitled, *Tejiendo de Otro Modo: Feminismo, Epistemología y Apuestas Decoloniales (Feminism, Epistemology, and Decolonial Bets)* (2014) the retos y tropiezos (challenges and missteps) when forging intercultural plurilogues with Zapatista women in Chiapas. One Indigenous woman said to them, “*Compañeras, su palabra es muy dura y mi corazón no las entiende* (Comrades, your words are too hard and my heart cannot understand them)” (p. 22). This transformative wisdom made them realize

how coloniality is socialized in the academe, obsessively insisting in the abyssal difference marking one side of the line as “unintelligible knowledge” that needs to be reformulated with “intelligible academic jargon” in the other side of the line to warrant white supremacy and expand the legitimized arrogant ignorance (Santos, 2018). But you, *comadre/compañera* AUTHOR 2, know how to talk with these dissident women locked in cruel prisons because of patriarchal abuse with soft words and open-heart weaving plurilogues of deep mutual understanding.

It is easy to forget the authentic commitment for anti-racist justice due to the seduced and devouring tentacles of academy with the purpose of maintaining coloniality disguised as universal science. In contrast, *comadre/compañera* MASKED, you show us how to authentically co-create intercultural relations with communities in struggle based on mutual recognition and dignified promotion of their own cultural language and identities – instead of the colonial lexicon and imposed exclusion of their beings. You teach us via the powerful resistance and emancipatory poetry of the Miya community that softens our hearts and sparks our bodies to imagine action against linguicide, genocide, epistemicide, and ecocide. You ask, “how do we build muscle to re-imagine different realities and co-construct them based on communities’ desires?” Our dissident solidarities dismantle, disapprove, repudiate, contradict, and confront the hegemonic ivory tower and use it to center community struggles and social movements in our classrooms, based on our praxes. We learn from movements around the world that have been demanding the rights of Mother Earth, cultures and traditions, as well as the right for a dignified life, sovereignty, and autonomous cultural identity for centuries.

Comadre/compañera AUTHOR 3, holding our hands against the colonial episteme based on race, gender, heterosexuality, and ableism, you courageously address the intersectionality caused by coloniality on dignified bodies that devalues and labels them “not

“able” to serve the brutal capitalist hydra. You teach us how communities build cohesion and popular power to define themselves. You demonstrate how they co-construct the needed infrastructure for their everyday existence and political demands, imagining their world not as “the other” but otherwise. That is, a world in which their world fits. You sensitively weave solidarities with them and courageously dismantle the colonial episteme of difference and exclusion.

Dissident women from Abya Ayala, Rosa Suarez, Rosa de la Hoz, and Yuli Yopez (2017), name dialogues of knowledges with communities in struggle for antiracist, social, epistemic, and ecological justice, “*El Círculo de la Palabra: Entetejiendo palabra y Pensamiento Bonito* (The Circle of Words: Weaving Words and Beautiful Thought).” *Comadre/compañera* AUTHOR 1, you conclude lovingly our dissident plurilogue *entetejiendo saberes* in beautiful thought, imagining the not yet, and skillfully *corazonando* with deep sensitivity. Outside the hegemonic jargon, you loudly whisper our *chismes* (gossips) to dismantle patriarchy, racism, heteronormativity, and ableism. In your dissident work, you empower generations of students to stand up and demand transformative change in the rusted university by embodying decolonial pedagogy while holding a loving container for them to confront white privilege.

We come from diverse geopolitical localities and positionalities and have the common privilege of being in the ivory tower as well as with communities. Yes, we can build international networks of solidarity against the capitalist hydra! (Sixth Commission of the EZLN, 2016). We must unite and conspire, weaving *nuestros rebozos*, like AUTHOR 1 proposed, and joyfully raising our knitted caps, like AUTHOR 2 proposed, opposing western hegemony in different forms. We denounce the white feminist savior complex as continuation of patriarchal hegemony that generates hierarchical difference as colonial legacy. We reclaim our womanist-*mujerista* (Bryant-Davis & Comas-Díaz, 2016) dissidence

joining hands of many colors with *campesinas*, *artesananas*, *poetas*, *curanderas*, students, *maestras*, scholar-activists, Indigenous peoples, Black communities, people of color, women in prisons, lesbians, gays, trans, queer activists, migrants, *caravanas sin fronteras*, and dreamers from the North and the South. We build cartographies of insurrect subjectivities from different localities: Indonesia, India, the United States, and México. Let's unite our *corazones*, "stirring trouble and building theories in the flesh" (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Morawski & Bayer, 1995), *sentipensando*, *palabrando*, and performing dissidence in our classrooms and beyond. Resisting being called subaltern, we shall create, embrace, cry, sing together, hope, dance, denounce, dream, and dare!

Con mucho cariño and dissident love,

AUTHOR 4

Dear AUTHOR 1, AUTHOR 2, AUTHOR 4 and MASKED,

While reading your letters, and writing mine, I was imagining that we were actually sitting across each other, having a kind of interconnected monolog and plurilogue at the same time. Together we were narrating our hopes, dreams, doubt, angers and despairs as well as the unanswered questions we were haunted by. We might hope to find answers in each other stories, but it was not the very reason that made us want to stay in the conversation, rather the affirming feelings of having others/friends/sisters who were wholeheartedly willing to listen to, witness, acknowledge, and accompany our journey and struggles. So, I was imagining a kind of conversation where strengths and encouragements did not only come from the words we were speaking and listening to, but also through our shared pauses and silences and moments where we couldn't really find the word to name the thought and feeling we were battling with, yet somehow, we felt that our friends/sisters could understand it anyway. That was the feeling I had when we had our shared session at the conference, when we had our last zoom hangout and when I wrote this letter.

With each story of liberation and resistance we shared, our belief in the possibilities for and the power of solidarities and radically inclusive imaginaries, as we learned from MASKED's reflection, were affirmed. The counter storytelling bravely enacted by Miya community is an invitation for us to be undeterred in our resistance against epistemic injustice by persistently questioning, problematizing, mocking and contesting the hegemonic narratives that have naturalized (and even morally legalized) violence, persecution and colonization. The activism of Lacandona youth sends a sense of hope about the possibilities of departing ourselves from the 'taken-for-granted fascinations' with the anthropocentric, paternalistic, colonizing, capitalistic ways of being that have disrespected and endanger our bio and socio-ecology. The shared commitment among women and children seeking asylum in a detention camp in Texas as well as among women/activists/researchers involved in the Public Science Project in New York, is an 'aesthetic provocation' for envisioning our shared quest for a more humane society. Witnessing the daring youth involved in the 'police-free school' activism reignite our belief that challenging status-quo is possible. And, it is from the determination of disability activists in Indonesia and families impacted by the stigmatizing-ableist society, I learn about the power of fostering collective critical consciousness as an avenue for surfacing and dismantling my ignorance of and partaking in the perpetuation of normalized dehumanization.

At the same time, however, as we travelled together from one story to the next, I couldn't help but notice that the colonial legacies of being had become the heart-wrenching thread that connects our stories. In our shared stories, I found embodied testaments of what became the opening sentence of AUTHOR 1's publication: "Coloniality outlives colonialism" (Fernández, Sonn, Carolissen, & Stevens, 2021, p. 1; Quijano, 2000). I was particularly drawn into what I read as the narratives of inflicted unworthiness. These appear

to be the narratives that has also become the connected thread between my grandmother, my mother and my generation.

My grandmother was born in the early of 1900s, the last century out of three centuries of the Dutch colonization in Indonesia. During her teenager, when she attended a catholic school run by a colonial missionary, she was baptized into catholic church. With this baptism, her belief in and practices of Javanese spirituality (the spirituality with which she was raised by her family and community) had gradually sidelined. In other words, her baptism was also a memento of how colonialism had set the parameter for what could be considered as a worthy or unworthy spiritualities. So, the narrative of inflicted unworthiness during my grandmother era was in the form of people being undermined for not following the religions introduced (or perhaps imposed) by the colonial ruling power.

My mother was born in the late of 1940s, the time when Indonesia was a young post-colonial nation. During her teenager in the mid of 1960s, when Indonesia was governed by the New Order regime, she witnessed what was considered as one of the darkest periods in Indonesian history. It was the time when political tensions and upheavals related with anti-communism happened in many countries and regions, including in Indonesia. During these years, hundreds of thousands of people associated or were accused of having association with the Indonesian Communist Party (ICP) or other leftist organizations were massacred, and 100,000 or more were tortured and imprisoned without any prosecution (Mulder, 1996). One of the dominant narratives used to justify this atrocity was the depictions of the supporters of the ICP as devilish atheists, therefore, it was morally mandatory to brutally exterminate those people. As a result, there was a political pressure for people to overtly express their religious identities and/or affiliations as a way of declaring 'I am not a communist'. During these years, the narrative of inflicted unworthiness was in the form of people being forced to live

their religions in ways that were instructed by the regime, otherwise they were at risk of being stigmatized as the enemy of the society or even being criminalized.

I was born in the mid of 1970s. Like most of those who were born in this decade, religion was central in our upbringing, throughout our schooling years and eventually it becomes a major part of how we live our lives, relate to each other and give meanings to our existence and environments. Throughout my adult life, I have witnessed how religions have become a kind of political commodity upon which political tensions, intergroup conflicts and violence, as well as community segregations are built or even orchestrated. What come next has been the depictions of religions as a key problem that has impeded the ability of Indonesia to be a progressive, modern, and democratic society. And with this, I experience the cliché of history repeating itself. My grandmother generation was undermined for believing in their traditional spiritualities, my mother generation has to bear a severe socio-political trauma for being forced to be religiously correct, and now my generation appears to be questioned and problematized for centering religions in both our personal and communal life. It was this kind of repeated story of inflicted unworthiness that also caught my mind when we were sharing our stories of liberation and resistance.

MASKED, as my heart was full of admiration for the powerful resistance and solidarity enacted by Miya community, at the same time, my mind was troubled by the arrogance of those who had treated Miya community as unworthy for owning their citizenship, place, culture, and even their sense of personhood. AUTHOR 4, my heart was moved by the dedications, pride, and respect of the Lacandona activists for their ancestors, history, culture, spiritualities and mother-nature. However, there was also part of my heart that sank for learning that we still have to deal with colonial legacies of knowledge that set the parameter for what can be considered as worthy or unworthy ways of knowing, understanding and relating. AUTHOR 2, the dissidence and radical solidarity shown by

women and children seeking asylum as well as those who were involved in the Public Science Project was aesthetically provocative. But it was also disturbing to learn about the continuing system that privilege particular groups who can unjustly determine who is worthy or unworthy for gaining legal justice, or even for living with dignity. AUTHOR 1, those youth courageously organizing ‘police-free schools’ enlightened my hopes for a more humane and transformative future. Yet, their struggles also told us about the continuation of race-based and class-based violence built upon colonial prejudices that create inhumane categories of worthy and unworthy beings.

In the context of disability in Indonesia, this repeated narrative of inflicted unworthiness has been in the form of portraying and treating disability as a pitiable and shameful condition, often associated with notions like wrath of God, karma, or incompetent and defective individuals who are unworthy for equal treatments.

With this reflection, I found that AUTHOR 2’s question about “the ethnographies of privilege” was really right on point. From the families and disability activists from whom I have been indebted for their ‘aesthetic provocation’, I learned that continuously reflecting on and having conversations around this question of ‘ethnographies of privilege’ has become a liberating gateway. As I learned from those families and disability activists, it is liberating to be able to assert that it is not my/yours/their disability that is shameful but it is my/yours/their ignorance of or complicity to ableism that is reprehensible. And, the gate to this liberation has been the awareness about the systems and practices that has privileged able-bodied people. Also, in a way, it is liberating to have an awareness that such a privilege has been produced and maintained through what anthropologist Tania Li’s (2007) calls as “the will to improve”

In the context of disability in Indonesia, this “will to improve” has been in the form of stigmatizing and patronizing research and interventions which position able-bodied persons in superior roles for abnormalizing, pitying, correcting and rehabilitating people with

disabilities. Perhaps, in a way, it was the same with what my grandmother experienced. For her, this “will to improve” was in the form of ‘saving people from false beliefs’. And, in the case of my mother generation, it was in the form of ‘saving people from the danger of communism’. So, as the narrative of inflicted unworthiness is repeated, apparently, so does the presumptuous ‘will to improve’ myths.

With this reflection, it seems that interrogating the question of ethnographies of privilege, may have to be started by interrogating my versions of “will to improve” that have consciously or unconsciously guided my positioning and role as an academic, the studies and activism I am involved in, as well as the ways I relate to the university where I work. So that is the question I’ll continually ask myself. And it was through and because of the aesthetic awakening each of you generously shared that I come to this reflection and question.

And for that, my friends/sisters I shout: *terima kasih!*

AUTHOR 3

Resisting the Erasures, Our Relational Writings as Epistolary Disruption

April 22 commemorates Earth Day. A memorable day of ecological awareness and celebratory gratitude to our Mother Earth. A day in which we humbly immerse ourselves in deep reflection on our arrogance, greediness, and destruction. A planetary consciousness that “womanifests” our insignificant existence in the Anthropocene. It vanishes and merges with the soothing surrounding of ecological ontologies in relation with and in the Earth. This is one of the significant erasures and exclusions in the hegemonic academy. We barely engage a spiritual relation with the Earth, *sentipensando* and *palabrendo* to co-construct the Ecocene.

In our civil and epistemic disobedience, we also note, as many feminists from the Global North and South have denounced, that our voices and contributions continue to be erased, shadowed, and even appropriated by so called “dissident men.” For instance, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012, 2018), an inspiring dissident and Indigenous *mujerista* from

Bolivia, overtly stated that those who have become popular in hegemonic discourse on decoloniality are mostly men teaching in prestigious universities in the Global North. These decolonial scholars, she added, forget to acknowledge the contributions of women who are still struggling in the southern trenches in solidarity with communities and social movements. These are courageous women who many times risk their lives. We dedicate our relationally threaded letters – our epistolary disruption against erasure – to these dissident and courageous women’s contributions.

Committed community psychologists embrace values of social justice and inclusion. Yet the voices of rebellious women and all those labeled as “the marginalized, the oppressed, the colonized” are transformed into victims and excluded as agentic contributors of significant knowledge and praxes in our field. Our scholarly productions rarely invite activists to create and lead the discourse; to write the “herstory” that is known but difficult to see. That is the absent narrative that is erased and excluded from academic discourse.

We, *mujeristas* and womanists, academics and practitioners, “womanifest” our commitment and transnational solidarities, our epistemic disobedience and resistance, centering the voices of these revolutionary women. Weaving with your stories about your remarkable mothers’ and grandmothers’ contributions, we want to invite María Guardado, a loving mother, a poet, and a tireless political activist to share her *testimonio* contributing to our struggle against erasure.

Fleeing the civil war in her native El Salvador, María received political asylum by the United States (US) in 1983. Because of her political activism, she was kidnapped and tortured by Salvadoran death squads that were funded by the US government. She transformed her personal horror and became a soul-moving poet and political activist in Los Angeles. In poetic voice against silence and erasure, after her presentation at the [Society for Community Research & Action 2011 Biennial](#), María wrote a letter inviting community

psychologists to revisit and redefine our values, research, and action. Below are a few stirrings for imperative change:

We are under the terror of pro-imperialist governments when we fight for social change that is fair. We are all human beings without exception to color or race. Therefore, we are thousands and thousands the tortured in imperial clandestine prisons in the world and a few of us survive. Demand a “Stop Now” to the US government and put an end to this major flagellation to humanity. Form a new world of peace and social justice for future generations. Without the painful immigration dying a terrible death on the journey and at the border.

María died on May 16, 2015. Her powerful presence remains in a majestic mural titled ["Maria de la Reforma,"](#) painted by Jorge González Camarena in a hotel located in *Avenida Reforma* in México City. María made an unforgettable mark in the souls of many who were gifted with her testimony, her teachings, activism for social and epistemic justice, immigration rights, and world peace. María Guardado wrote many poems, but we share with you one entitled [Madre](#), which she wrote in a letter-form to a dear friend, and is most pertinent to the themes we have been weaving together.

An Epilogue to a Plurilogue of Threaded Letters

My Mother's Letters, and the Letter My Grandmother Could (not) Write

There is a truth that I (AUTHOR 1) am grounded in and which I never doubt in my heart-soul and at my core. This truth is that my mother loves me. In her own complexities, holding intergenerational trauma and a relentless sense of faith-hope that gives *ánimo*, she loves me. And I love her. The love that I know exists between us is rarely verbally expressed, however. My mother infrequently utters *un te quiero o te amo*. My mother knows the word love, yet expresses it verbally rather seldomly. She reserves the articulation of “I love you,” for only those moments where her letters cannot reach me. Instead of saying it or speaking

about love, my mother writes and enacts her love through words and acts of care, dissent and refusal. Dissenting to have her family divided and fragmented by a border. Refusing to remain in the shadows as an undocumented migrant woman. She is a *mujer de pocas palabras*, yet her hands tell and thread stories. She is a writer, and I am her audience. The letters my mother wrote to me over the years have served me as a *rebozo* to keep me connected to her in some way, grounded in my roots, in our humble beginnings, and what we can offer of ourselves onto others when we expand our reach, *cuando abrimos los brazos, nuestros rebozos*.

And as we thread and weave, and knitted together this paper, I was reminded of my *abuela*, the doilies and *rebozos* she crafted in silence – piece by piece, move by move, counting, praying the rosary, and *cantando*. Her eyes never leaving the needle and thread, her heart-soul grounded and strong; her heart-mind full of dreams and visions, which she never spoke of yet were threaded into her *rebozos*. My grandmother does not know how to read and write. She knows how to pretend to read and write. She knows how to dance better than anyone I know too. She knows how to swing and wrap the *rebozo para zapatear*. She expressed love through acts/actions of care. From cooking a hearty *mole* to wrapping *corundas* in fresh corn husks, to toasting *chiles* until we all leave the kitchen coughing, yet she remained steady, unhinged, inhaling the fire. The embers of my grandmother's ways of being, and expressing love and dissent manifested in my mother as well.

Unlike my grandmother who at age ten was forced to leave school to care for her siblings, my mother, who also cared for her siblings, read and wrote. She preferred the pen and paper over the needle and thread, however. She preferred writing to express her heart. Still, expressed words of love and deep emotion are not the cords my mother sings. While the acts of care and love remain across our generational bonds, we have come to express our love in various ways. My *abuela* through her actions, *mi mamá* through her writings – letters and

notes appended to my morning pillow, the refrigerator door, the door knob, the *taco de papas con huevo o frijoles con queso* that she wrapped into what Americans called a “burrito.” Her words in writing, her brief yet deep emotive notes, wrapped and contained me in my uncertainties as a child. Insecurities about whether her love was present when she was absent for work; boxing asparagus or tomatoes at the cannery, cleaning other people's houses, cutting up meats and cheeses at the Italian deli, learning how to read and write in English at night. She wrote me letters. She wrote me small notes in phonetic English: *ay luv yu*.

My mother wrote me letters to express her love, as well as her apologies when the intergenerational wounds of trauma from migration, displacement, economic uncertainty, tiredness and longing for home surfaced. My mother wrote me short and long letters, two or three words letters – and letters that, by academic standards, would exceed journal limits. I read those letters. I kept some of them in my pockets, in between books, and a makeshift treasure chest that now holds our bonds across time, space and place. I learned to write by responding to my mother's letters and notes; responding to an inquiry, expressing gratitude for her blessings, and forgiveness for the hurt or harm. Our letters were the way in which we learned to connect, to reflect and amend: to love.

Letters Live Long Lives: Intergenerational Love-ing and Dissent-ing

There is power in letters. AUTHOR 2 opened our paper paying respect to the rich legacies of letter writing by feminist writers and thinkers, among them *Kartini*, who AUTHOR 3 powerfully honored. AUTHOR 2 and AUTHOR 3, like AUTHOR 4's featured poem by María Guardado, in relation to our letters, MASKED's response, and AUTHOR 1's reflections on her mother's letters, and the letters her *abuela* wrote with a needle and thread, remind us that letters live long lives.

Letters move. Letters travel. Letters cross boundaries, borderlands and bifurcated binaries. Letters live; they bond and build. And when they – the letters – move across time,

space, and place, they can move us physically, spiritually and emotionally. The letters we, as dissident women, have humbly offered in this paper move(d) us close(r) in a time when we are “together apart.” Our letter made us feel – it led us to reveal our reflections of a past dialogue, yet we have threaded our reflections of that gathering in relation to our dreams, longings, desires, and dissent in our present and our future. Our letters guided us to reveal. In the process of reflecting through our writings we have sought to thread together a *rebozo*, a knitted cap, a tapestry, to heal. Letters move, they travel, and in doing so they reveal and allow(ed) us to hear – to listen with the heart – as we attempt to heal.

Letters transcend and trespass; they also thread. They are the needle that weaves, *el hilo y la aguja*, our stories alongside the longings for connection, relationality and radical solidarities that are grounded in what is felt in body, bone and flesh, in the marrow of our soul. Letters connect and amend when words are lost, when we cannot express verbally or even physically what is felt. Thus, the needle and thread that is the pen and paper, the strokes of the keyboard on a blank screen that is a canvas, resurface words from the heart. The needle and thread begin to move. Letters move, reach, and live on unlike any other mode of writing. They have the capacity to invite, incite and ignite reflection along with emotions and actions (De Robertis, 2017; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Rosales & Rosales, 2019; White, Wright-Soika, & Russell, 2007). Your/our letters have rekindled the embers of our cold and wilted sensibilities in the face of perpetual assemblages of violence. Our letters are the salve with which we can, to some degree, be at ease. We are threading meanings and dreams into being.

We are *mujeres*, each of us of a different thread – texture, feel, color – and each of us *tejidas*, threaded relationally, humanly, and lovingly. We care for each other not because we have something to offer to one another, or because we are crafting and stitching together. We care for each other because we can see ourselves in full, because we walk together, even dance in dissent. We unravel the yarns of the academy that entangle us, not alone or isolated

but rather in the company/accompaniment of each other; we have no other ways to exist and resist the academy. Our relational decolonial love is our disruption against the erasure of our heart-soul-fist, our foremothers and those that came and will come before, and after us.

Letters are a mode through which we can reach out, lean in. Letters cross, perforate the boundaries of what is often difficult to say out loud and express. We can reach, extend and embrace the self with and within ourselves. What we wrote and what we offered, are our writings in letter form, speaking back and affirming to ourselves and each other how we resist. We resist the threads that wound, shackle and bind us, and we refuse being trimmed and knotted. We are threading/reading, we are writing/righting. The letters we have offered here are our letters of hope, love and dissent that what we have shared through these reflections circulate beyond the paginations of a journal, the academy and the positionalities that have been ascribed to us. Yet we affirm, know, see and feel ourselves as being, holding, carrying and threading much more than what we allow ourselves to show. We are piecing together these letters to invite you, dear reader, to thread with us with a needle of hope and a yarn of heart a *rebozo* that will hold and uplift.

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8/13/2021

Dear Dr Fernandez

Thank you for submitting your manuscript “Letter Writing as Decolonial Inquiry toward Relational Solidarities of Epistemic Justice and Desire s” to the special issue of the American Journal of Community Psychology on “Fostering and Sustaining Solidarities”. We have now received reports from reviewers at bottom of this letter. While the reports are positive, reviewers offered feedback to strengthen the paper in several areas and recommended the paper be accepted subject to minor revisions. Reviewer 1 offered extensive comments in the spirit of dialogue for you to consider. We hope that you find the feedback in the reports and on the manuscript useful and that these provide some direction for how to navigate the style requirements of the journal.

We agree with the feedback and that you used what is most useful in reshaping the paper to meet the requirements. We will treat the article as a full-length manuscript, which has a page limit of 30 pages.

Reviewer 1 suggested that including the ICCP video might not be ideal. The same reviewer offer suggestions for reorganising the paper to better show how letter writing as a feminist praxis can foster transnational solidarities. There are other examples of this practice that could be cited in your paper.

Perhaps your authorship collective can come to some consensus about how best to move forward with these comments within the constraints of the journal requirements.

We ask that you revise the paper in line with the feedback provided in the reports and by the editors. We hope that you are excited to revise – we think this can make a fantastic contribution to the special issue with some revisions. Please attend to the revisions and return to us the following in 3 weeks, by the 3rd September, to samuel.keast@vu.edu.au: a letter of how you have addressed the feedback, a tracked changes version, and a final copy of the manuscript. If this is not possible, please let us know.

Regards

Christopher Sonn for the guest editorial team

Reviewer 1.

Dissident Women: Letter Writing as Decolonial Inquiry toward Relational Solidarities of Epistemic Justice and Desire is a provocative and challenging submission requiring multiple readings in order to do justice to any review of the manuscript. Many congratulations to the authors for their presentation at the ICCP and for the subsequent conversations that contributed to the article that was submitted to the Special Issue. In the absence of having been present to or having viewed the panel at the 8th International Conference of Community Psychology – and with a blinded submission – a first read was challenging since much of the text assumes knowledge of the praxis of the authors. Once having viewed the panel presentation – after having first read the blinded submission “blind” – it is no longer a blind review... nor was it really fully blind without having viewed the ICCP presentation given my familiarity with much of the work intimated, although never really discussed, in the paper. That said, I have done my best to respond to the request for a “blind review” and offer these suggestions as a peer, colleague, friend, fellow traveler who is on the faculty of a predominantly white university of the global North and constrained by, yet critical of, the hegemonic privileges of EuroAmerican epistemes and, per Karen Barad, ethico-onto-epistemologies as well as by our occupations of Indigenous territories within and beyond the US nation-state.

I begin with an embrace of what seem to be the multiple goals of the article, that is, to center letter writing and the particularities of feminist/womanist/women’s dissident letter writing as a vehicle for unsettling an academic journal publication – albeit one that has already broken with the academy by including First Person Accounts, as one of its vehicles for publishing. It is that vehicle that I had in mind, as well as the call for this special issue, when reviewing this submission. The comments below were developed to attempt to “enter into dialogue” with your plurilogue, recognizing of course that I might be disrupting rather than contributing to the plurilogue given that I “was not” and “am not” there! Thus, please keep that in mind as you read all that follows and the comments in/on the text.

That said, although I deeply appreciate having been introduced to the work of Kartina and her multiple positions within Indonesia the limits of space make it challenging to both situate her letters as resources for political organizing and/or social movement building (which seems to be why she is introduced here) and to clarify how her story was repressed, distorted, and incorporated into the precise nation state she sought to up end.

That said, the importance of letters within and across cultures and nation states and peoples as well as letter writing as a strategy or resource for building relational solidarities and epistemic justice – and disrupting the academy and objectivist discursive positivist me-search and publications – is laced throughout the paper BUT each of these focuses or goals is frequently hard to follow in the current organization. Similarly, the text seems to require that one have either been present at the presentation or watch it before reading the text – and this may work easily online but less so in a print version of the article. Thus, the perhaps too conventionally trained researcher in me wonders whether or not the letters might be shuffled in a way that

would put one that describes in more detail the community collaborative feminist research of each author, that is, the substantive praxis that each author embraces affectively in her text (as well as that of the ABSENT author) might open the paper. The letter from Author 2 does this, as I read it, better than some of the other letters that focus more explicitly on the work of the letter's author and echo or celebrate the shared values, onto-epistemologies, abstract concepts rather than the praxis. Secondly, the letter of Author 4 emphasizes a theme that seems to be another important agenda/eje/focus of the paper and to be taken up in less detail by most of the authors, that is, the current university context in which each are situated/oppressed/etc. Author 4 challenges those dominant ways of knowing or onto-epistemologies as well as the ways in which her own story of parental pressure pushed her into these dominant discourses/ways of knowing and some of their consequences. If this is indeed an important theme or organizing or transversal issue, might the Letter by Author 4 be a way to introduce it – and then others linking to it would be a way to unfold the critique through distinctive ways of challenging that episteme? And. These suggestions might facilitate the article reflecting more of the plurilogue that you say your time in the seminar presentation and your conversations via zoom since that conversation represent. As is, there are wonderful particularities in each letter but rather than being threaded in ways that clarify the eje that weaves them together they are surrounded by either autobiographical nuggets that are rich but sometimes distracting or by the repetition of what might be a “chorus” that recurs in multiple moments in the text but hangs in the air rather than being grounded in the rich praxis that one suspects has been reported in the panel presentation.

I wonder also if the autobiographical nuggets, most of which have something to do with letters or letter-writing might be organized vis-à-vis each other rather than standing either within the author's longer letter or somehow on their own, and/or as an epilogue that is not positioned as an epilogue but rather before the conclusion. Given the length of the paper which I assume is a “first person account”, albeit of multiple first persons, is 10 pp. longer than the journal's maximum N of pages for this submission, one might also consider whether or not some of these nuggets might be saved for future publications.

Finally, a rather distinct and perhaps undoable suggestion is to consider how to reorganize the article in ways that put texts from different authors side by side (in terms of the page's formatting) or a chunk from one author followed by a related chunk from another. This might offer visual support for imagining what I think I understand by your term, plurilogue. AND/OR it might be used to punctuate the professional and personal/autobiographical texts from some of the authors that offer a slightly different framing of letters as that would fuse the personal and activist scholarly selves, again visually as well as textually.

In addition to these comments, there are others in the attached text, with some requests for clarification on particular terms. I did not highlight untranslated Spanish terms as I assume that they were not translated as a way of asserting/affirming language justice issues. Given the horrific levels of monolingualism in US psychology, I wonder how to negotiate this but leave that to the authors and SI editors.

Reviewer 2.

Thank you for the invitation to review this paper. It is a very powerful piece and very beautifully written and I find myself wondering what kind of violence the review process in itself does to such a piece that challenges some of the fundamental practices of the academy...

I like the way the piece draws on so many concepts in community psychology whilst simultaneously enacting them in the writing of the piece, a live example of scholars 'in praxis'. The code-switching is really powerful. The rich panoply of conceptual framings foregrounding solidarity, affect, emancipatory ethics, decolonial love and the list goes on.. This not only speak to but also brings to life the aims of the special issue from a decolonial feminist perspective. I also like the framing of the piece, starting with the Kartini letters, moving through to the authors letters to each other and ending with Maria's letter.

If there is one question I have for the authors is: **why the term 'evidence-based embodied practice'?** It feels contradictory to use the language of 'evidence' that their approach to knowledge production seeks to move away from. Why not something more along the lines of 'narrative-based embodied practice'? It reminds me of Adichie's treatise on the difference between fact and truth – where a fact is devoid of emotion, whereas the truth comes with a story...evidence to me is about facts.

The piece is too long according to the journal guidelines. Authors could try to shorten to 30 pages – I would suggest that author 4 reduces the length of their letter and to remove the epilogue section towards the end. Also needs a light edit of the language. Finally, the piece is very critical of the academy – which is its essence – but am wondering whether the authors should not position themselves more as 'building' a new kind of academy given the incredible work that they are.

**Dissident Women: Letter Writing as Decolonial Inquiry toward Relational Solidarities
of Epistemic Justice and Desire**

AUTHOR 1

AUTHOR 1 INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

AUTHOR 2

AUTHOR 1 INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

AUTHOR 3

AUTHOR 1 INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

AUTHOR 4

AUTHOR 1 INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

Commented [A1]: Not sure the text takes this up in the same ways as it does the rest of the title.

Abstract

Braiding our words, “dissi-dance,” and desires, this paper sought to engage how various social actors, and communities—which we are a part of and belong to—challenge structural violence, oppression, inequity, and social, racial, and epistemic injustice. We thread these reflections through our written words, in **subversive letters which we offer in the form of a written relational dialogue**: a plurilogue that emerges in response to our specific locations, commitments, and refusals, as well as dissents. Our stories and process of dissent within the various locations, relationships, and contexts that we occupy served as the yarn and needle that thread our stories, our posed questions, and reflections. Braiding, threading and weaving together, we animate deep decolonial inquiries within ourselves and our different cultural contexts and countries. Refusing individualism, refusing illusions of objectivity as distance, refusing the academic as expert and refusing the exile of affect and emotion on academic pages, we choose to occupy academic writing and ask: *What if academic writing were stitched with blood and laughter, relationships and insights, rage and incites? What if, at the nexus of critical psychology and decolonizing feminism, grew “evidence based embodied praxis?”* Unlike academic writing, designed to camouflage affect, pain, connection, relationality and subjectivity, **these letters are unapologetically saturated in care and wisdom – embodied evidence**. Our **plurilogue of dissent** offers a view to advance community research and action towards goals of liberation, decoloniality, and community wellness.

Keywords: dissidence, letters, epistemic justice, aesthetic awakening, oral histories, decolonial *mujerista* and womenist psychologies

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**Dissident Women: Letter Writing as Decolonial Inquiry toward Relational Solidarities
of Epistemic Justice and Desire**

“Dissent is verbal resistance. It is the affirmation of our voices, of our worth.

...And, in fact, dissent is not unrelated to love. ...speaking love is an act of dissent.” (Carolina De Robertis, 2017, p. 7; In *Radical Hope: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times*)

Dear AUTHOR 1, AUTHOR 2, AUTHOR 4 and MASKED,

Reading each of your letters did give a feeling of being wrapped in an affirming shawl. It was one among those few moments when I felt that I did not only use my eyes to read the words written but also with my whole heart and body. English is my third language. My mother tongue is bahasa Jawa (Javanese language). It is the language I speak in any context other than those that require formality, like at work, where I have to use Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian official language). So, with English and Bahasa Indonesia, I tend to feel that there is a sense of distance between these languages and myself. Therefore, with English or Bahasa Indonesia, I tend to feel that I speak and write mainly with my head. It is when using Bahasa Jawa that I tend to feel more cognitively and affectively connected to what I speak. However, it was not the case with reading your letters and writing mine. It felt as if I spoke and wrote in Bahasa Jawa.

Thank you. Terima kasih.

AUTHOR 3

Oh, querida comadrita AUTHOR 2, your writing is always a testimonio of deep wisdom and love. It felt like pushing aside everything else to joyfully run

to the mailbox and desperately open the long-desired letter that has magical power for our craving souls. In gratitude for continuing to ignite our most invigorating desires to co-create the otherwise.

Abrazos,

AUTHOR 4

An Introductory Prelude to Our Epistolary Plurilogue

Letter writing is a long and luscious practice of/by/for dissident women; a typically private exchange of love, pain, stories, struggles, desires and longings. The intimacies of letters can launch movements, as private details seep into public space, catalyzing political possibilities that speak structural truths and taunt dominant narratives. We are reminded of *Letters of a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs* (Lyons, 2007) and Smith-Rosenberg's 1975 essay, *The Female World of Love and Ritual*, drawing from diaries and correspondence among intimate women in 19th century United States. We remember *Letters from Mothers to Daughters and Daughters to Mothers* edited by Tillie Olsen (1993), weaving 120 writers of prose and poetry crafting intimate pieces passed between generations, and are moved by Gio Swaby's recent exhibition at the Claire Oliver Gallery, *Both sides of the Sun* framed as a love letter to Black women's style and aesthetics. In 2019, more than 200 Latinx actors, activists, civil rights and labor leaders published *Querida Familia Letter*, in the *New York Times*, that opens with: "If you are feeling terrified, heartbroken and defeated by the barrage of attacks on our community, you are not alone." The tradition of letter writing is pointed and relational, an affective and collective capillary that entwines us across time and space. Powerful and clearly outside the canon of academic social science discourse. Until now.

Across media, time frame, historic context, a woman writes to woman/women, mothers to daughters, daring to speak into the world words/stories/testimonios/images held in

Commented [A2]: In many ways, yes, but in other ways found in narrative psychology or narrative analyses more broadly, particularly in analyzing letters between and/or among women or other historically marginalized folks as historical documents, etc. E.G., Liz Stanley et al writing about the letters of South African feminist Olive Schreiner OR Abigail Stewart writing about/analyzing life/development of Vera Brittain, etc.

the heart, chest, soul, too dangerous to be spoken but in need of release. Audre Lorde (1984) may have captured our practice as “erotic”:

[the] erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling. In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various source of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change. (p. 53)

So let us assume letters are erotic – unleashing power of unexpressed feelings.

Letters have been primarily, but not only (see Ta-nehisi Coates’ letter to his son, *Between the World and Me*, 2015), a practice by/for/with those who identify as women. Perhaps as women it has been/is always too dangerous to speak aloud what we are thinking, feeling, and holding, but a letter escapes when passions refuse to be contained. When “our insides jump, even as we may appear still” as AUTHOR 3 told us during one of our writing/reflecting meetings. Letters are penned in the ink of affect, pain, longing, connection; drafted for an audience, with a purpose and unapologetic intent. Once they sail out into the world, the writers can’t control the response, the receipt or the reverberations. The release is thrilling and anxiety gathers until we hear how/if they land.

We stand on the sweet and worn shoulders of women who dared to write – trans and cis, highly educated and barely, mothers who tucked notes into children’s lunch boxes, girls who wrote on bathroom walls. Those who came before and wrote before. These letters too often die with the women who receive, or they have been lost to his-story, erased/ignored, treated as if too messy or sentimental or the contents not “rigorous.”

Letters stand in bold and bodacious contrast to academic writing. As Mik Billig in *Learning to Write Badly* (2013), and Sandra Harding in *Situated Knowledge* (1988) would argue, the voice of the academic scholarship is militantly singular, objective and passive. We learn to narrate from a God’s eye view, a view from nowhere; we are disciplined to extract

Commented [A3]: And to what extent, if at all, are you distinguishing between letter writing and communicating via social media and/or email? Those theorizing letter writing as source of data for analysis (see, e.g., several chapters in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*, make such distinctions... not sure how relevant they are here?

Commented [A4]: I suggest including this here not only due to the next sentence about God’s eye view but also because you address this directly below.

the word I, remove all sticky traces of affect, erase clues of relationship and delete words that may reveal our desires or commitments. We worry this is what passes for “appropriate” social science academic writing; “evidence based”; no audience, no heartbeat; accountable to no one; form pre-determined; a pile of evidence designed to prove/convince “what is” rather than a gesture and embrace to provoke a sense of what else is possible, how might things be otherwise. We seek to decolonize academic writing in psychology so it has a **pulse**.

In this article we **stitch fiercely** a series of letters we have written to each other, after we re-viewed our **MASKED LINK** video from the 8th International Congress on Community Psychology (ICCP) conference panel on *Creating Inclusive Cultures and Healthy Communities*, where we shared our activist community-based inquiries nourished in solidarity with movements for justice and where we curated **a transnational conversation** that nourished what Della V. Mosley, Helen Neville and others (2020) call “radical hope” – the **courage to forge inquiries with communities in struggle, and never on**. Unlike academic writing, designed to camouflage affect, pain, connection, relationality and subjectivity, these letters are **unapologetically saturated in care and wisdom – embodied evidence**. In the spirit of dissident women, in this article, AUTHOR 1, AUTHOR 3, AUTHOR 4 and AUTHOR 2 have written letters to each other, *not outside the genre of academic writing, but within*.

With these letters we drench a journal in the affects, solidarities, disappointments, rage, laughter and connections we embody alongside community-based struggles – our sites of activist research – and with each other. **We publish these musings, so they may endure over time. Refusing individualism, refusing illusions of objectivity as distance, refusing the academic as expert and refusing the exile of affect and emotion on academic pages, we choose to occupy academic writing and ask: *What if academic writing were stitched with blood and laughter, relationships and insights, rage and incites? What if, at the nexus of critical psychology and decolonizing feminism, grew “evidence based embodied praxis?”***

Commented [A5]: OK but aren't there a number of scholars before you - perhaps even including yourselves in other contexts - who have been attempting this for decades, i.e., writing against the grain, from the margins, etc. What is unique or different about this article vis-à-vis those goals? Might it be that you are all academics writing to each other as academics? Or?

Commented [A6]: This is a provocative methodological statement (if I may call it that). Might you explore/explain what you mean here? As is the letters feel more like a pastiche, pasting together different people's reflections on their own and each other's praxis w/o sharing much about what the praxis is. Or below you call this a bricolage... another naming of the processes... you may resist clarifying which it is but for those outside your plurilogue it is challenging to follow.

Commented [A7]: If this is what was curated in ICCP, where does it appear in the letters explicitly? Or should one expect to read about it?

Commented [A8]: Is publication the only way for something to endure and why in a refereed journal? That is, do you want them to endure in this venue specifically? Or? The previous section suggests that they are not “musings” but rather a co-constructed way of speaking truth to power. Is it both? Or?

Commented [A9]: OK but you might want to say more about this since you are writing as individuals? The nexus of individuality and community emerge below with greater clarity.

Commented [A10]: Not sure if you are answering these questions with this piece of work? Or asking them? And is it a quote as it ends with quotation marks but I am not clear where the quote begins.

A word about “absences.” As you might have noticed, in our original conference panel, we were joined by sister/friend/colleague MASKED. Our ideas entangled with hers. While she is not an official “author,” her wisdom sits on these pages, even if she could not find the time to write with us. That is we include MASKED as a sister-in-inquiry, as she was with us at the conference where our words and maybe tears embraced. When we decided to co-author an article, MASKED responded – with regret – that she could not write now. And yet our *insights* and our *incites* are entangled as she prioritized carework and other fights: caring for students, family, and community; resisting institutionalized whiteness and its myriad manifestations; contending with unfathomable trauma, loss, and rage in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic in India.

Across contexts and rooted in a decolonial feminist praxis, we write to and with each other, through emotion, connections, passions and vulnerabilities, across nation states and oceans, about inquiries launched in feminist solidarity *between* academics and communities in struggle. We enact a collective, decolonizing feminist epistemic bricolage. This time we will not allow the herstories of “evidence based embodied praxis” to be erased by masculinist voice-overs. We document the resonances of oppression, resistance and love that shimmer across the Global North and Global South, and we share our letters with you, archived in this journal, as a cross-generational gift for critical psychologists yet to come.

We begin this process, however, first in honor and in remembrance of the long history of decolonial feminist letter writing, specifically of *Kartini*’s letters in radical times of dissent, resistance and revolution – times of a past with relevance for today and tomorrow.

Grounding Our Process, Honoring *Kartini*’s Letters

Fostering solidarity and radically inclusive imaginaries was the yearning and question that brought us together into a series of dissident conversations during and beyond the ICCP conference. Echoing the iconic quote from philosopher Maxine Greene, conversations may

Commented [A11]: This might be a paragraph where you can include reference to the Miya as it is not clear in the paper who/what the reference is to Miya given her absence until very far into the paper.

not change the world, but **conversations may change the ways we think about our world**. In the case of Indonesia, such a provocative conversation was embodied in the figure of *Kartini*, **a woman who ignited the Indonesian women emancipation movement through the subversive letters** she wrote for her allies both in the colonized Indonesia and the Netherlands. Through these letters, she contested the oppressive systems of her lifetime in the colonial era of Indonesia: Western colonization, Javanese feudalism, patriarchy, racism and sexism that had perpetuated the subjugation of women of color. Her birthdate, April 21, is celebrated as the Indonesian Women's Day, and it was also the month when we were preparing this article.

From *Kartini*, we learned how personal letters were used as a political pamphlet for amplifying subversive voices silenced/repressed/condemned by the ruling powers. Written between **1899 and 1904**, *Kartini's* letters documented her correspondence with her comrades in which she exposed various forms of discriminations prevailing in her society (Coté, 1992). The letters also voiced her resistance against the imposing supremacy maintained by colonialism, feudalism, and sexism (Kartini, 1992, 2005). Her letters were also the megaphones she used for advocating women's liberation, particularly, through equal access for education, which during her lifetime was a radical inclusive imaginary no one dared to think of.

Kartini's letters were a pathway of consciousness rising and solidarity for her Dutch comrades, as well as the generations of Indonesian women's movement activists. It was her privilege as an aristocratic woman that afforded her an opportunity to access a Dutch elementary school from which she learned the language of the colonizer. During the colonial era, such a schooling system was created by the Dutch to produce low rank colonial administrations. Instead of obeying this design, *Kartini* occupied the language of the colonizer to advocate for the liberation of her society. So dangerous were her letters that various forms of censorships were found in its publications (Bijl & Chin, 2020).

Not only her letters that were censored, but even worse, there was a period in the Indonesian post-colonial history when *Kartini's* historical contributions to her nation were also profoundly distorted. Such a distortion particularly occurred during the New Order era (1965-1998) when Indonesia was governed by a militaristic regime that was culturally sustained by a patriarchal system that glorified the roles of male figures in both public and domestic spheres. During this period, *Kartini's* heroism was mainly represented around her domestic roles as a devoted wife and mother (Bijl & Chin, 2020). Her political letters and voice were hardly mentioned in any historical textbooks learned in schools. Instead, schools often obliged female students to participate in traditional fashion shows and cooking competitions to commemorate *Kartini's* birthdate. Her provocative letters gradually disappeared from people's historical awareness, as did her courageous political agency. Consequently, the name of *Kartini* became a symbol of unquestioned complicity to the discriminatory, sexist social systems prevailing in the Indonesian society; the very system against which *Kartini* set her long-life struggle.

Kartini, and the historical background to her life, inspired and affirmed for us the power of letter writing for fostering solidarity and radically inclusive imaginaries. Having the opportunity to present *Kartini's* history in this article is an opportunity to reignite her political legacies. In another words, to re-center her provocative awakening which like many other dissident women's voices are often seen as a threat or a dangerous noise that must be or is therefore often silenced, condemned, or willfully forgotten, set aside/outside the *status quo*.

We join *Kartini* in this practice of dissent through our letters.

Four Letters on Dissident Radical Solidarities, Love and Refusal

And so, we watched the [MASKED LINK](#) video of our conversation, and instead of writing separate sections, we dedicated ourselves to writing letters, to each other, stitching our work into each other's projects.

Commented [A12]: Not sure the limited space you have allows you to present her history per se but rather to state her contribution/critique of the dominant society and how her contributions have been lost to history? Given the focus on letters in this article I wonder if you might use the space to exemplify her use of letters as an organizing tool which seems to be why she is included here? Or is it more about being suppressed in history? Or?

Queridas compañeras, AUTHOR 2, AUTHOR 3, AUTHOR 4 and MASKED,

I am inclined to begin this letter as I have been starting most of my emails and correspondence these days, wishing that you and your loved ones are healthy, well and cared for. I mean it every time I write it, and I am also desperately wanting to embrace each of you because so much has unfolded in varied ways over the past year or more, that I long for that physical connection that can only be experienced when in the embodied material presence of a dear long missed friend, sister, mother, grandmother, *mujer, compañera – nosotras*.

I have been piecing together this letter over the past days, trying to discern how to best begin to describe what I want to share with you. And how listening to your voices – the plurilogue of threaded words and reflections nearly six months after ICCP – still evokes for me what AUTHOR 2 described as an “aesthetic awakening.” More than an aesthetic awakening, I would characterize our plurilogue multi-vocal intersectional dialogue (Einola et al., 2020), and the connections and links we have continued to cultivate since then, as human and humanizing risings! Waking up feels passive to me, but *rising* – rising with the sun, rising with the blooming greeneries and colors of spring, rising with the waves and tides of trembling waters that clash and settle back. Your words then and now, and this friendship, *comadrerismo*, evokes for me a human/humanizing rising, as well as a response to the assemblages of violence both within and outside the discipline, the academy, the locations, places and spaces wherein we are situated and often (mis)placed by others – those who shape and contort the/their power to structure the lives of the others, yet fail to embrace mutual reciprocal recognitions.

Nosotras, the we and them, and the us, is a word that surfaced for me as I listened to our ICCP panel dialogues. *Nosotras*, which Gloria E. Anzaldúa describes as a linking expression of communality, mutuality, interconnections and reciprocal human recognition, *al estilo Fanon*, I believe is what we cultivated in our panel. And, what we strive to sow, till and

Commented [A13]: Plurilogue and dialogue seem to contradict each other – not clear what this means.

grow among the communities wherein our collaborative actions-in-practice, the named research, unfolds and flows. As I reflected on the powerful stories, provocations and words of dissent, resistance and refusal you all shared, I felt a connection to each of you as there was so much fullness in what you generously offered and provoked!

From the Miya poetry that spoke to refusal and resistance from erasure – and which reminded me of my adolescent years learning English through writing poetry I pieced together in *Spanglish*, my third language. Poetry helped me find and connect with my voice as I became silent and silenced in school. Poetry, as you well described, MASKED, heals. Poetry was a move, a way for me to dance with others, peers and students, and share and connect especially with those who saw me as academically disengaged and deficient.

Walking through the journey of my younger self then led me to reflect on AUTHOR 3's words, especially the importance of *vivir con proposito*, to live with a purpose. AUTHOR 3 described how social care is fundamental to the Javanese cultural ethic of being of service to and with others. Specifically, of the importance of being acknowledged and recognized, as well as provided with opportunities to express and engage in the capacity to contribute to communities. To engage in social care, in a meaningful, authentic and relational way, is to live with purpose, intention and direction toward the betterment of communities, and society. This cultural value of importance and significance among Javanese communities, especially the disability community, affirms for me what my parents raised my siblings and I to practice consistently: *vivir para servir*. This loosely translates into “live to serve;” however it is not intended to mean or be interpreted as charitable service or volunteerism in some form of voyeurism or a savior complex. On the contrary, it is about utilizing the privilege, resources, access and leverages at our disposal – the tools, antidotes, disruptions, and strategies – within our complex positionalities of power, privilege and reach/research to support, transform and

Commented [A14]: Reference unclear

Commented [A15]: These seem like very different dynamics, with the first centered around the individual and recognition for what/who one is and the second about service – are both “social care”? OR is this an extension of social care into new domains? Or?

wield what is within our institutions or settings toward the interests, needs and desires of communities who may invite, welcome and call upon us, in their own ways of being, to unite.

La union hace la fuerza, in unity there is strength; and it is in this commUNION of radical relational solidarities, which you each described, that I was also reminded of the importance of holding multiplicity, pluriversality and complexity, as not only a metaphor for a beautiful tapestry of *saberes entretajidos* (threaded knowledge), but a necessary *rebozo* (shawl) to cloak us from the singularity, the narrowness and hegemony that often constitute, and continues to circulate within and outside of the academe. AUTHOR 4's journey into the voices of decolonial scholars from the Majority World that have contributed to decoloniality and decolonization affirms the expansiveness of knowledge, of *cosmovisiones* (cosmovisions) and *realidades* (realities) that are otherwise. *Pachamama* is us, *nosotras*.

How we care for ourselves cannot be detached from how we care for our earth, and all non-human beings. Once more, I am reminded of the interlacing threads and bonds that hold us together, that sustain communities across tides of tension, and across generations, land, and dimensions.

To the youth that are witnessing and contesting the violence of this very moment – from *la Selva Lacandona*, the rivers near the Beki river in Lower Assam, to the urban and rural streets in protest affirming Black Lives Matter, as do the lives of those whom are perceived as sub-human or lacking because of how our societies have hegemonically constructed what it means to be an “able-bodied” being. Indeed, from student activists organizing to decolonize the university to elementary, middle and high school youth calling for “police free schools.” The youth, advocates, poets, and formerly incarcerated women – they are the vanguard of change. In the jungle and river valleys, in the classroom, and at home and in the streets, they carry the torch to light and agitate for institutional change. And from here, from where I stand as an educator, accomplice and ally to dissenters and resisters,

Commented [A16]: Earth mother OR mother earth? Or is this being used to mean something else?

especially youth activists organizing within the neoliberal university, and from whom I learn to co-organize/strategize, they keep the embers of my daydreaming and imaginations alive and radically hopeful.

What would our lives be without the capacity to imagine, dream? What is lost by the death of envisioning and seeing, and therefore sensing in the soul-flesh-heart, something transformatively different from what is? The loss and death of freedom, and the struggle to claim, demand and fight for it. AUTHOR 2's experience with incarcerated women whose dreams of another reality are foreclosed by the limited opportunities to imagine, to dream and envision their lives apart, away and outside of where they are confined leads me to conclude that perhaps – or most surely – the greatest disruption we can have, wield and leverage is that of cultivating a radical revolutionary imagination to dream! Dare communities in struggle dream, and bring into being the world and conditions they strive and must exist in. It is not a matter of deservingness, of who can or should earn their freedoms from the chains of the carceral state, but rather a recognition that emancipation and emancipatory praxes, like decolonial dreaming and imaginings, radical relational solidarities, and pluriversalities are some strategic moves that can lead to collective liberation.

Collectively the dialogues among *nosotras* that surfaced through this panel, underscore the urgencies and possibilities of epistemic transformative justice in action and practice. And, I add, across multiple-levels – from the relational and communal, to the structural, political and cosmological – as well as domains and mediums, such as poetry, organizing, advocacy, stories, and policies. What I humbly offered in this letter are *sentir-pensamientos*, feeling/sensing-thoughts, that I describe as reflections on the kinds of “moves” I, we, *nosotras*, engage in as we pursue and engage consistently in dissident acts. In the dissidence – the dizzy daring double-dutch *doble paso* dance – of disrupting hegemonic power, deconstructing coloniality and colonialism, and unsettling all that must not be nor

Commented [A17]: This and many other statements above ASSUME that one has listened to the panel or was present to it – and otherwise they seem a bit abstract, or hanging in the air? Also, to what extent are you focusing on multiple dialogue or on what some state in certain moments as a plurilogue?

continue to structure communities and lives: the racism, sexism, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, and more beyond naming.

Each of you, AUTHOR 3, AUTHOR 4, AUTHOR 2 and MASKED, through your praxis, ways of knowing and being, as well as relating, reflecting and responding to the assemblages of violence, the amalgamation of oppressive power, remind me of, and in my humble view, exemplify what Gloria E. Anzaldúa described as “spiritual activism.” In the words of Anzaldúa (2003), spiritual activism is:

With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the precious- ness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings—*somos todos un país*. Love swells in your chest and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything. . . . You share a cate- gory of identity wider than any social position or racial label. This *conocimiento* motivates you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean—to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing. (p. 558)

The work of love, of heart-soul, that you each engage in with and within your respective communities and contexts affirm for me that the spiritual activism that Anzaldúa described is not only possible but desperately necessary if we are to radically imagine and therefore create otherwise, and anew more humane and transformative just conditions in communities and collectives in the present, and with and for generations to come. Let us then continue in this rEVOLution where we sign on to embracing and enacting dissent as an imperative to decolonial liberation.

Abrazos,

AUTHOR 1

Dear MASKED, AUTHOR 1, AUTHOR 3 and AUTHOR 4,

Commented [A18]: This would be more accessible if each of the authors locus of engagement, resistance, etc. had been identified prior to these statements. There is some sense that the person speaking works in disability rights/justice and that one of the authors works with incarcerated folks but these are more intuited than made explicit.

As I write I want to bathe in and also think critically about the kinds of transnational solidarities we breathe, bend toward, struggle to sustain, cherish. As I sat to write this letter, looking for where to begin, I was reminded of a story about knitted caps in detention centers, that my friend/colleague/activist Andrea Juarez Mendoza told me. As a doctoral student/translator/researcher, Andrea traveled, with a legal watchdog group, to Dilley detention camp in Texas, where she met and translated with/for/alongside women and children seeking asylum, originally from Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala... There she witnessed sweet and bold solidarities nourished in hell. As some refugee women and children were leaving, and others staying, weeping/smiling/confused/holding hands across borders of state violence, those who were leaving wore the small caps of green and brown that the collective of women [within the center \(?\)](#) knit. And all sang, “*Si una se queda, todas nos quedamos. Si una se va, todas nos vamos.*” “If one of us stays, we all stay. If one of us leaves, we all leave.” (personal communication, 2018, see also Mendoza, A. J. A *Nepantlera* in the Academy: Sowing Seeds con El Hilo, forthcoming).

I wonder about the radical solidarities we stitch together and the knitted caps we wear when we are working in/with/alongside communities of struggle, and where we place our caps when we enter the academy. These questions of [transnational solidarities](#) hatched in struggle, and then sustained across place/time/movements/writing/poetry/praxis, sit at the heart of my letter to you.

Sister/friends... As I listened to our [MASKED LINK](#) at the conference, I felt a soft [shawl of knowledge/love-soaked inquiry](#) draped across a sprawling we: [a collective of activists/poets/journalists/storytellers/researchers and teachers of the Miya community situated in the borderlands of Northeastern India to youth and families of children with disabilities in rural Indonesia to Lacandon youth activists fighting for the rainforest in](#)

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Commented [A19]: Is the example above one of transnational solidarities? If so, might it be so clarified? And is that example an exemplar of this author's praxis? Again, it would be helpful if so identified,

Chiapas to immigration justice youth activists in San Diego, and with frayed edges the shawl reaches deep into a women's prison in New York State.

This shawl of epistemic justice, held by our 10 hands and many more, embraced the spaces where we each sit with/listen to/resist alongside/hold sacred and nourish counter storytelling, in the language of MASKED. Together we bend toward emancipatory ethics as AUTHOR 3 speaks through disability justice and calls for a radical commitment to *silaturahmi* – to chat beside without pre-determined diagnoses. We are indebted to the stunning critical ancestry AUTHOR 4 narrated, grounded in Indigenous epistemologies of the South, so that we may make the road [together] by walking otherwise. AUTHOR 4 beckoned us to envision pluriversals, drawn by wisdom and epistemes of the Global South, engaged by the ethical and political obligations to humans and non-humans, building an ecology of non-capitalist solidarities.

Not surprising, but nourishing, we all spoke of love and our inquiries forged “with.” Each of us speaks/writes to challenge dominant and dehumanizing policies, practices, ideologies, enactments of state violence aimed at marginalized groups, people with disabilities, outsiders, insiders excluded within and the earth as we “perforate the official archive” (thank you MASKED), sit beside and refuse to intervene (thank you AUTHOR 3), and offer up stories long silenced and buried (thank you AUTHOR 4). We animated our attempts to reveal the connective tissue of suffering, resistance and history to structural violence, dignity, and desire (thank you AUTHOR 1), even as we acknowledged that we labor in deeply contradictory spaces drenched in/threatened by neoliberalism, white supremacy, racial capitalist logics – otherwise called the academy. And throughout our sistertalk, across time zones and on distinct lands all trembling with state violence, racial capitalism, neoliberalism, environmental crises, and the relentless assaults of hetero-patriarchy, we were held/listened to/reflected back and encouraged by the activist scholar

Commented [A20]: I would put this at the beginning of the article and yoke each author to their context/praxis

Commented [A21]: Above it is a shawl of “knowledge/love-soaked inquiry” and now “epistemic justice” ... not sure what the author(s) is(are) seeking to communicate here.

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spirit of AUTHOR 1. *We knit caps of a different sort, and we invented a grammar for liberatory praxis.*

Commented [A23]: Not clear – seems like a reference to above caps but why are they different? In what ways?

Since that evening, and again since the watching, at odd moments, I can feel your smile, AUTHOR 4, float across my screen and into my heart. This morning as I was walking with my 17-month-old grandbaby Rosie to the park, I tried to imagine how you sit, AUTHOR 3, beside families of children with disabilities, particularly at a moment of COVID-19, isolation, separation, and what comfort you must convey. And whenever I turn on the news and hear a Republican declare that January 6 insurrectionists were patriots, seared into my soul are MASKED's words: "Majoritarian stories rely upon strategic forgetting."

That morning/evening/afternoon, we held each other, as we have accompanied our projects and co-conspirators, co-researchers and comrades, as I imagine we try to curate "holding environments" (thank you Winnicott) with our students. In these enactments of fragile-ities (not so solid), we knit pluriversity, public shared space where knowledges from the ground up filled our hearts and provoked us to imagine what else is possible.

Across our brief "tapas" of presentations, I could hear exquisite care and attention to the local, and an insistence on contesting the dominant gaze and violence on Miya, on families of children with disabilities in Indonesia, and those who love and live in the rainforests in south America. I could hear demands for epistemic justice, appreciating the words/actions/poetry/sensing and feeling of those so generous to welcome us into their struggles. Together we wondered aloud – to whom/with whom/for whom do we write?; to whom and with whom do we sit, alongside, in silence?; how do we document the knowledge and practices already woven over generations by communities of struggle and survival, resistance and desire; what do we want to keep sacred and what might we speak back, to psychology and the academy, about the spaces/poetry/struggles seeping into our bodies. I felt

warm and held by the connections stitched across, and laden with the weight of questions of accountability, provocation, and transformation across our varied sites of practice.

I am at once interested in the fragile and deliberate solidarities that Andrea found at the border, and the very different but also fragile and deliberate solidarities we forge across the academy as we dismantle illusions of objectivity and expertise, pierce the membrane between academic knowledge and the knowledge of struggle, culture, desire marinating on the ground in communities and lands under siege. And so for comfort, I turned to an old intellectual friend, French political theorist Chantal Mouffe, to think about how we might always honor the historic and current particulars of the local, and yet also makes visible the capillaries of oppression and resistance, struggle and joy, that travel across. Mouffe calls these “chains of equivalence”:

I am not talking about abandoning particular forms of struggle. But when we talk about collective will, we will inevitably create some contradictions. That is politics. The chain of equivalence is about mobilizing people together through their different struggles—we call this a convergence of struggles. And creating a bond between those struggles in a way that recognizes the specificities of different struggles but also fiercely recognizing the commonalities and solidarities among the various struggles. (December 13, 2016, *The Nation*)

And so, I giggle to imagine that we too don knitted caps sitting atop our heads somewhere in the cyber-cloud above Melbourne (Australia) even as we commit to inquiry forged with movements for land and cultural dignity, disability justice, the earth, and for prison abolition.

Before closing, I pose a set of troubling questions for us to ask ourselves and each other, and our students, for the rest of our lives:

On the *neoliberal academy*: I wonder if/that the university is worthy.

Commented [A24]: These questions seem central and cross-cutting, central to the work of each of the letter writers -and, as importantly, central to those who seek to disrupt community psychology and those who seek to disrupt or decolonize feminisms and psychologies. Might they either frame the *Dissident women writing letters* OR, if not, might they or some revised version of them pull the reflections together as arenas or *ejes* for those within and beyond the academy who seek to disrupt and transform?

On *audience*: To whom do we speak/write/engage poetry, spirituality, theory, aesthetic provocation?

On *solidarities*: I wonder if you, at times, feel like when you write, in your publications, you are simply translating – with ethics and strategic refusals – the wisdom and counter stories of communities, blessed and cursed with invisibility, to centers of power refusing to listen/feel/respect.

On *gendered violence*: I wonder – how is it possible – in every context we sit, accompany, we hear whispers of gendered violence – how do we understand that bloody stream of social life predictable across land/nation/class, and why are we always surprised?

On *wounds*: I wonder how we speak of the suffering and wounds without taking up and reproducing a damage centered narrative, and how do we refuse the conflation of resistance/survival as if this were justice.

On *privilege*: I wonder why we don't conduct ethnographies of privilege to reveal the deeply unjust accumulations of power, wealth, control and the enactments of exploitation.

On *building communities* in hell: I wonder how we continue to build living/loving communities of sensing and feeling in institutions of state violence.

I wonder when we will be able to hug...

Sending you sweet thoughts, friends.

AUTHOR 2

Dear AUTHOR 1, AUTHOR 2, AUTHOR 3, and MASKED,

...we will continue pursuing our denunciations to the national and international levels [in such forums] as the UN [United Nations] and OAS [Organization of American States] about the violation of human rights, and we will continue to denounce the violations to our human rights as indigenous pueblos. And that we do not want to continue being used as booty in election

campaigns that profit from our poverty. We are in solidarity with the struggle that is being developed by our *compañeras* in the Yacaltecas Union of Women for their respect of their free determination in the election of their own authorities and the defense of communitarian institutions [traditional indigenous communal structures] ("Weaving in the Spaces," p. 139).

...We started with about fifty women and girls and we were able to officially constitute ourselves and start to get support. We were called Te Gunaa Ruinchi Laadi [Women who Weave]. This group still exists ("Indigenous Women's Activism in Oaxaca and Chiapas," p. 168). (In Speed et al., 2006, *Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas*).

I tried to weave my feelings and thoughts after reading your loving and encouraging letters and my clumsy reply, incapable of articulating the soulful *movimiento* in my heart. I sat in front of my computer screen just feeling, allowing mis *lágrimas* to speak on my behalf. I did not mind if my audience speaks Spanglish or not, disregarding the need for imposed translation in the monolingual empire, and avoiding academic language. AUTHOR 1, you gave me the necessary courage. Your powerful words invite us to continuously dismantle the empire, the hegemonic academy, troubling the status quo *comadreando*. You ignite my enthusiasm with love and courage para *seguir caminando*.

I feel at home with you, dissident women who are "weaving in the spaces" from *muchos lugares*. I feel deep joy and permission to confide what is brewing in my heart and migrant flesh. *Comadre/compañera* AUTHOR 3, you dare us to rethink our positionalities in the hegemonic academy while committing to work with our communities with ethical accountability. I would like to share how painful it was to enter the academy in foreign lands trapped in-between languages, misrepresentations, pretensions, jargons, discriminations, insecurities, and equivocations. My parents wanted me to be educated in the global North. I

had to learn a different language and practice a new walk. Because of my short legs, I always had to catch up. There was never time, I always had to run. No matter how hard I tried, I was gazed as an uneducated, sensual, and exotic woman in search for a European husband, a home, financial security, a fake reputation, and so on. But more than anything, I was expected to become fully white, to speak the European language without accent, to cover my *pecas* (freckles) and stay away from the sun. International government grants covered the costs of my education and required secured return to my “salvaged land.” I was expected to teach others what I learned in their “civilized land” in order to promote progress and modernization. But it was a total failure. The conviviality with the Indigenous communities forged my deep admiration for their knowledge and ethical relationality with nature. It was hard to unlearn the lies of the West but as many dissident women declare, we must dare!

We come from various grounds but weaving in spaces we become aware of the pervasive colonial difference in our daily lives. **It is not the same to enunciate injustice from the social struggle as it is to write about it in the academe.** We know because we have been in both places. I cannot stop the inner struggle, the deep conflict, the constant question: “What am I doing in the ivory tower? Have I lost my way home to *el otro lado*, where *nuestras comunidades* speak a different language? I want to *palabrandar* with them, walking and weaving insurrect words, making roads otherwise, *sentipensando* in affective conviviality with them. Asking day after day, where are the meeting points of solidarity in our struggles for liberation? How can we conspire in the belly of the beast, the hegemonic academy and its institutions, to dismantle the pervasive racism, heteronormativity, ableism, white supremacy, decapitating the capitalist hydra, mobilizing resources, and finally ending the epistemic and political ignorance and lies written in academic textbooks? How can we manifest decolonial imagination into transformative embodied action? We must ask many questions because in

times of trouble it is not about finding the right answers but constantly questioning what is taken for granted. It is about finding ruptures that create systemic dysfunction.

During the time I spent in affective conviviality with the Lacandón communities in the Sacred Rainforest of Chiapas, I witnessed in awe her powerful and rhythmic song, constantly reminding us of the insignificance of human existence. The Anthropocene diluted in her loving presence, permeating every breath, every pulse, and body movement with her rich biodiversity. There I understood her ancestral wisdom *con corazonar* as Indigenous knowledges can only be deeply comprehended with our hearts. For Indigenous cosmovisions, the Earth is testimony of the right for life. But this right is differently understood in the global discourse of universal human rights conceived by and for whites.

Comadre/compañera AUTHOR 2, you stir trouble raising the demands and solidarities of courageous incarcerated women against their brutal confinement that is only possible in the systemic decadence we continue to live. You teach us how these women survive the violent attack of abuse and claustrophobic coloniality in their solidary resistance against the capitalist hydra and its required weapons such as, racism, patriarchy, xenophobia, pathological greediness, emptiness, alienation, and despair. You courageously accompany them demanding the end of violence against them and their children. Their powerful stories forever tattooed their feminine, sacred power in *nuestras almas*: Yes, we can – *si se puede*!

Three dissident women from Abya Ayala, Yuderkis Espinosa, Dina Gomez, and Karina Ochoa shared in their work entitled, *Tejiendo de Otro Modo: Feminismo, Epistemología y Apuestas Decoloniales (Feminism, Epistemology, and Decolonial Bets)* (2014) the retos y tropiezos (challenges and missteps) when forging intercultural plurilogues with Zapatista women in Chiapas. One Indigenous woman said to them, “*Compañeras, su palabra es muy dura y mi corazón no las entiende* (Comrades, your words are too hard and my heart cannot understand them)” (p. 22). This transformative wisdom made them realize

how coloniality is socialized in the academe, obsessively insisting in the abyssal difference marking one side of the line as “unintelligible knowledge” that needs to be reformulated with “intelligible academic jargon” in the other side of the line to warrant white supremacy and expand the legitimized arrogant ignorance (Santos, 2018). But you, *comadre/compañera* AUTHOR 2, know how to talk with these dissident women locked in cruel prisons because of patriarchal abuse with soft words and open-heart weaving plurilogues of deep mutual understanding.

It is easy to forget the authentic commitment for anti-racist justice due to the seduced and devouring tentacles of *the* academy with the purpose of maintaining coloniality disguised as universal science. In contrast, *comadre/compañera* MASKED, you show us how to authentically co-create intercultural relations with communities in struggle based on mutual recognition and dignified promotion of their own cultural language and identities – instead of the colonial lexicon and imposed exclusion of their beings. You teach us via the powerful resistance and emancipatory poetry of the Miya community that softens our hearts and sparks our bodies to imagine action against linguicide, genocide, epistemicide, and ecocide. You ask, “how do we build muscle to re-imagine different realities and co-construct them based on communities’ desires?” Our dissident solidarities dismantle, disapprove, repudiate, contradict, and confront the hegemonic ivory tower and use it to center community struggles and social movements in our classrooms, based on our praxes. We learn from movements around the world that have been demanding the rights of Mother Earth, cultures and traditions, as well as the right for a dignified life, sovereignty, and autonomous cultural identity for centuries.

Comadre/compañera AUTHOR 3, holding our hands against the colonial episteme based on race, gender, heterosexuality, and ableism, you courageously address the intersectionality caused by coloniality on dignified bodies that devalues and labels them “not

Commented [A25]: Missing from references – imagine it is Del Sousa Santos?

“able” to serve the brutal capitalist hydra. You teach us how communities build cohesion and popular power to define themselves. You demonstrate how they co-construct the needed infrastructure for their everyday existence and political demands, imagining their world not as “the other” but otherwise. That is, a world in which their world fits. You sensitively weave solidarities with them and courageously dismantle the colonial episteme of difference and exclusion.

Dissident women from Abya Ayala, Rosa Suarez, Rosa de la Hoz, and Yuli Yopez (2017), name dialogues of knowledges with communities in struggle for antiracist, social, epistemic, and ecological justice, “*El Círculo de la Palabra: Entetejiendo palabra y Pensamiento Bonito* (The Circle of Words: Weaving Words and Beautiful Thought).” *Comadre/compañera* AUTHOR 1, you conclude lovingly our dissident plurilogue *entetejiendo saberes* in beautiful thought, imagining the not yet, and skillfully *corazonando* with deep sensitivity. Outside the hegemonic jargon, you loudly whisper our *chismes* (gossips) to dismantle patriarchy, racism, heteronormativity, and ableism. In your dissident work, you empower generations of students to stand up and demand transformative change in the rusted university by embodying decolonial pedagogy while holding a loving container for them to confront white privilege.

We come from diverse geopolitical localities and positionalities and have the common privilege of being in the ivory tower as well as with communities. Yes, we can build international networks of solidarity against the capitalist hydra! (Sixth Commission of the EZLN, 2016). We must unite and conspire, weaving *nuestros rebozos*, like AUTHOR 1 proposed, and joyfully raising our knitted caps, like AUTHOR 2 proposed, opposing western hegemony in different forms. We denounce the white feminist savior complex as continuation of patriarchal hegemony that generates hierarchical difference as colonial legacy. We reclaim our womanist-*mujerista* (Bryant-Davis & Comas-Díaz, 2016) dissidence

Commented [A26]: Versus transnational plurilogues? That is, are you using different terms to represent different experiences? Or are you using them interchangeably?

joining hands of many colors with *campesinas*, *artesanas*, *poetas*, *curanderas*, students, *maestras*, scholar-activists, Indigenous peoples, Black communities, people of color, women in prisons, lesbians, gays, trans, queer activists, migrants, *caravanas sin fronteras*, and dreamers from the North and the South. We build cartographies of insurrect subjectivities from different localities: Indonesia, India, the United States, and México. Let's unite our *corazones*, "stirring trouble and building theories in the flesh" (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Morawski & Bayer, 1995), *sentipensando*, *palabrando*, and performing dissidence in our classrooms and beyond. Resisting being called subaltern, we shall create, embrace, cry, sing together, hope, dance, denounce, dream, and dare!

Con mucho cariño and dissident love,

AUTHOR 4

Dear AUTHOR 1, AUTHOR 2, AUTHOR 4 and MASKED,

While reading your letters, and writing mine, I was imagining that we were actually sitting across each other, having a kind of interconnected monolog and plurilogue at the same time. Together we were narrating our hopes, dreams, doubt, angers and despairs as well as the unanswered questions we were haunted by. We might hope to find answers in each other stories, but it was not the very reason that made us want to stay in the conversation, rather the affirming feelings of having others/friends/sisters who were wholeheartedly willing to listen to, witness, acknowledge, and accompany our journey and struggles. So, I was imagining a kind of conversation where strengths and encouragements did not only come from the words we were speaking and listening to, but also through our shared pauses and silences and moments where we couldn't really find the word to name the thought and feeling we were battling with, yet somehow, we felt that our friends/sisters could understand it anyway. That was the feeling I had when we had our shared session at the conference, when we had our last zoom hangout and when I wrote this letter.

Commented [A27]: Perhaps put earlier in the text... and what are insurrect subjectivities?

Commented [A28]: monologue

Commented [A29]: this seems like a better way of capturing the individuality and the plurality reflected in the article.

With each story of liberation and resistance we shared, our belief in the possibilities for and the power of solidarities and radically inclusive imaginaries, as we learned from MASKED's reflection, were affirmed. The counter storytelling bravely enacted by Miya community is an invitation for us to be undeterred in our resistance against epistemic injustice by persistently questioning, problematizing, mocking and contesting the hegemonic narratives that have naturalized (and even morally legalized) violence, persecution and colonization. The activism of Lacandona youth sends a sense of hope about the possibilities of departing ourselves from the 'taken-for-granted fascinations' with the anthropocentric, paternalistic, colonizing, capitalistic ways of being that have disrespected and endanger our bio and socio-ecology. The shared commitment among women and children seeking asylum in a detention camp in Texas as well as among women/activists/researchers involved in the Public Science Project in New York, is an 'aesthetic provocation' for envisioning our shared quest for a more humane society. Witnessing the daring youth involved in the 'police-free school' activism reignite our belief that challenging status-quo is possible. And, it is from the determination of disability activists in Indonesia and families impacted by the stigmatizing-ableist society, I learn about the power of fostering collective critical consciousness as an avenue for surfacing and dismantling my ignorance of and partaking in the perpetuation of normalized dehumanization.

At the same time, however, as we travelled together from one story to the next, I couldn't help but notice that the colonial legacies of being had become the heart-wrenching thread that connects our stories. In our shared stories, I found embodied testaments of what became the opening sentence of AUTHOR 1's publication: "Coloniality outlives colonialism" (Fernández, Sonn, Carolissen, & Stevens, 2021, p. 1; Quijano, 2000). I was particularly drawn into what I read as the narratives of inflicted unworthiness. These appear

to be the narratives **that has also become** the connected thread between my grandmother, my mother and my generation.

Commented [A30]: That have also become? Or?

My grandmother was born in the early of 1900s, the last century out of three centuries of the Dutch colonization in Indonesia. During her teenager, when she attended a catholic school run by a colonial missionary, she was baptized into catholic church. With this baptism, her belief in and practices of Javanese spirituality (the spirituality with which she was raised by her family and community) had gradually sidelined. In other words, her baptism was also a memento of how colonialism had set the parameter for what could be considered as a worthy or unworthy spiritualities. So, the narrative of inflicted unworthiness during my grandmother era was in the form of people being undermined for not following the religions introduced (or perhaps imposed) by the colonial ruling power.

My mother was born in the late of 1940s, the time when Indonesia was a young post-colonial nation. During her teenager in the mid of 1960s, when Indonesia was governed by the New Order regime, she witnessed what was considered as one of the darkest periods in Indonesian history. It was the time when political tensions and upheavals related with anti-communism happened in many countries and regions, including in Indonesia. During these years, hundreds of thousands of people associated or were accused of having association with the Indonesian Communist Party (ICP) or other leftist organizations were massacred, and 100,000 or more were tortured and imprisoned without any prosecution (Mulder, 1996). One of the dominant narratives used to justify this atrocity was the depictions of the supporters of the ICP as devilish atheists, therefore, it was morally mandatory to brutally exterminate those people. As a result, there was a political pressure for people to overtly express their religious identities and/or affiliations as a way of declaring 'I am not a communist'. During these years, the narrative of inflicted unworthiness was in the form of people being forced to live

their religions in ways that were instructed by the regime, otherwise they were at risk of being stigmatized as the enemy of the society or even being criminalized.

I was born in the mid of 1970s. Like most of those who were born in this decade, religion was central in our upbringing, throughout our schooling years and eventually it becomes a major part of how we live our lives, relate to each other and give meanings to our existence and environments. Throughout my adult life, I have witnessed how religions have become a kind of political commodity upon which political tensions, intergroup conflicts and violence, as well as community segregations are built or even orchestrated. What come next has been the depictions of religions as a key problem that has impeded the ability of Indonesia to be a progressive, modern, and democratic society. And with this, I experience the cliché of history repeating itself. My grandmother generation was undermined for believing in their traditional spiritualities, my mother generation has to bear a severe socio-political trauma for being forced to be religiously correct, and now my generation appears to be questioned and problematized for centering religions in both our personal and communal life. It was this kind of repeated story of inflicted unworthiness that also caught my mind when we were sharing our stories of liberation and resistance.

MASKED, as my heart was full of admiration for the powerful resistance and solidarity enacted by Miya community, at the same time, my mind was troubled by the arrogance of those who had treated Miya community as unworthy for owning their citizenship, place, culture, and even their sense of personhood. AUTHOR 4, my heart was moved by the dedications, pride, and respect of the Lacandona activists for their ancestors, history, culture, spiritualities and mother-nature. However, there was also part of my heart that sank for learning that we still have to deal with colonial legacies of knowledge that set the parameter for what can be considered as worthy or unworthy ways of knowing, understanding and relating. AUTHOR 2, the dissidence and radical solidarity shown by

women and children seeking asylum as well as those who were involved in the Public Science Project was aesthetically provocative. But it was also disturbing to learn about the continuing system that privilege particular groups who can unjustly determine who is worthy or unworthy for gaining legal justice, or even for living with dignity. AUTHOR 1, those youth courageously organizing ‘police-free schools’ enlightened my hopes for a more humane and transformative future. Yet, their struggles also told us about the continuation of race-based and class-based violence built upon colonial prejudices that create inhumane categories of worthy and unworthy beings.

In the context of disability in Indonesia, this repeated narrative of inflicted unworthiness has been in the form of portraying and treating disability as a pitiable and shameful condition, often associated with notions like wrath of God, karma, or incompetent and defective individuals who are unworthy for equal treatments.

With this reflection, I found that AUTHOR 2’s question about “the ethnographies of privilege” was really right on point. From the families and disability activists from whom I have been indebted for their ‘aesthetic provocation’, I learned that continuously reflecting on and having conversations around this question of ‘ethnographies of privilege’ has become a liberating gateway. As I learned from those families and disability activists, it is liberating to be able to assert that it is not my/yours/their disability that is shameful but it is my/yours/their ignorance of or complicity to ableism that is reprehensible. And, the gate to this liberation has been the awareness about the systems and practices that has privileged able-bodied people. Also, in a way, it is liberating to have an awareness that such a privilege has been produced and maintained through what anthropologist Tania Li’s (2007) calls as “the will to improve”

In the context of disability in Indonesia, this “will to improve” has been in the form of stigmatizing and patronizing research and interventions which position able-bodied persons in superior roles for abnormalizing, pitying, correcting and rehabilitating people with

disabilities. Perhaps, in a way, it was the same with what my grandmother experienced. For her, this “will to improve” was in the form of ‘saving people from false beliefs’. And, in the case of my mother generation, it was in the form of ‘saving people from the danger of communism’. So, as the narrative of inflicted unworthiness is repeated, apparently, so does the presumptuous ‘will to improve’ myths.

With this reflection, it seems that interrogating the question of ethnographies of privilege, may have to be started by interrogating my versions of “will to improve” that have consciously or unconsciously guided my positioning and role as an academic, the studies and activism I am involved in, as well as the ways I relate to the university where I work. So that is the question I’ll continually ask myself. And it was through and because of the aesthetic awakening each of you generously shared that I come to this reflection and question.

And for that, my friends/sisters I shout: *terima kasih!*

AUTHOR 3

Resisting the Erasures, Our Relational Writings as Epistolary Disruption

April 22 commemorates Earth Day. A memorable day of ecological awareness and celebratory gratitude to our Mother Earth. A day in which we humbly immerse ourselves in deep reflection on our arrogance, greediness, and destruction. A planetary consciousness that “womanifests” our insignificant existence in the Anthropocene. It vanishes and merges with the soothing surrounding of ecological ontologies in relation with and in the Earth. This is one of the significant erasures and exclusions in the hegemonic academy. We barely engage a spiritual relation with the Earth, *sentipensando* and *palabrendo* to co-construct the Ecocene.

In our civil and epistemic disobedience, we also note, as many feminists from the Global North and South have denounced, that our voices and contributions continue to be erased, shadowed, and even appropriated by so called “dissident men.” For instance, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012, 2018), an inspiring dissident and Indigenous *mujerista* from

Bolivia, overtly stated that those who have become popular in hegemonic discourse on decoloniality are mostly men teaching in prestigious universities in the Global North. These decolonial scholars, she added, forget to acknowledge the contributions of women who are still struggling in the southern trenches in solidarity with communities and social movements. These are courageous women who many times risk their lives. We dedicate our relationally threaded letters – our epistolary disruption against erasure – to these dissident and courageous women’s contributions.

Committed community psychologists embrace values of social justice and inclusion. Yet the voices of rebellious women and all those labeled as “the marginalized, the oppressed, the colonized” are transformed into victims and excluded as agentic contributors of significant knowledge and praxes in our field. Our scholarly productions rarely invite activists to create and lead the discourse; to write the “herstory” that is known but difficult to see. That is the absent narrative that is erased and excluded from academic discourse.

We, *mujeristas* and womanists, academics and practitioners, “womanifest” our commitment and transnational solidarities, our epistemic disobedience and resistance, centering the voices of these revolutionary women. Weaving with your stories about your remarkable mothers’ and grandmothers’ contributions, we want to invite María Guardado, a loving mother, a poet, and a tireless political activist to share her *testimonio* contributing to our struggle against erasure.

Fleeing the civil war in her native El Salvador, María received political asylum by the United States (US) in 1983. Because of her political activism, she was kidnapped and tortured by Salvadoran death squads that were funded by the US government. She transformed her personal horror and became a soul-moving poet and political activist in Los Angeles. In poetic voice against silence and erasure, after her presentation at the [Society for Community Research & Action 2011 Biennial](#), María wrote a letter inviting community

Commented [A31]: In and of itself this is an extraordinary woman and an impactful poem BUT how this text on resisting erasures “fits” is unclear. If it is meant to “echo” or pull one forward from the erasure of Kartina’s letters, the thread needs to be enunciated more clearly for this reader.

psychologists to revisit and redefine our values, research, and action. Below are a few stirrings for imperative change:

We are under the terror of pro-imperialist governments when we fight for social change that is fair. We are all human beings without exception to color or race. Therefore, we are thousands and thousands the tortured in imperial clandestine prisons in the world and a few of us survive. Demand a “Stop Now” to the US government and put an end to this major flagellation to humanity. Form a new world of peace and social justice for future generations. Without the painful immigration dying a terrible death on the journey and at the border.

Commented [A32]: Immigrant?

María died on May 16, 2015. Her powerful presence remains in a majestic mural titled "[Maria de la Reforma](#)," painted by Jorge González Camarena in a hotel located in *Avenida Reforma* in México City. María made an unforgettable mark in the souls of many who were gifted with her testimony, her teachings, activism for social and epistemic justice, immigration rights, and world peace. María Guardado wrote many poems, but we share with you one entitled [Madre](#), which she wrote in a letter-form to a dear friend, and is most pertinent to the themes we have been weaving together.

An Epilogue to a Plurilogue of Threaded Letters

My Mother's Letters, and the Letter My Grandmother Could (not) Write

There is a truth that I (AUTHOR 1) am grounded in and which I never doubt in my heart-soul and at my core. This truth is that my mother loves me. In her own complexities, holding intergenerational trauma and a relentless sense of faith-hope that gives *ánimo*, she loves me. And I love her. The love that I know exists between us is rarely verbally expressed, however. My mother infrequently utters *un te quiero o te amo*. My mother knows the word love, yet expresses it verbally rather seldomly. She reserves the articulation of “I love you,” for only those moments where her letters cannot reach me. Instead of saying it or speaking

Commented [A33]: This feels like a powerful but misplaced section – it is not a conclusion, opens another set of reflections about letters and is only contributed to by one of the authors... and connections to others is not clear – AND calling it an epilogue suggests that it might come after the conclusions if it is to be included?

about love, my mother writes and enacts her love through words and acts of care, dissent and refusal. Dissenting to have her family divided and fragmented by a border. Refusing to remain in the shadows as an undocumented migrant woman. She is a *mujer de pocas palabras*, yet her hands tell and thread stories. She is a writer, and I am her audience. The letters my mother wrote to me over the years have served me as a *rebozo* to keep me connected to her in some way, grounded in my roots, in our humble beginnings, and what we can offer of ourselves onto others when we expand our reach, *cuando abrimos los brazos, nuestros rebozos*.

And as we thread and weave, and knitted together this paper, I was reminded of my *abuela*, the doilies and *rebozos* she crafted in silence – piece by piece, move by move, counting, praying the rosary, and *cantando*. Her eyes never leaving the needle and thread, her heart-soul grounded and strong; her heart-mind full of dreams and visions, which she never spoke of yet were threaded into her *rebozos*. My grandmother does not know how to read and write. She knows how to pretend to read and write. She knows how to dance better than anyone I know too. She knows how to swing and wrap the *rebozo para zapatear*. She expressed love through acts/actions of care. From cooking a hearty *mole* to wrapping *corundas* in fresh corn husks, to toasting *chiles* until we all leave the kitchen coughing, yet she remained steady, unhinged, inhaling the fire. The embers of my grandmother's ways of being, and expressing love and dissent manifested in my mother as well.

Unlike my grandmother who at age ten was forced to leave school to care for her siblings, my mother, who also cared for her siblings, read and wrote. She preferred the pen and paper over the needle and thread, however. She preferred writing to express her heart. Still, expressed words of love and deep emotion are not the cords my mother sings. While the acts of care and love remain across our generational bonds, we have come to express our love in various ways. My *abuela* through her actions, *mi mamá* through her writings – letters and

notes appended to my morning pillow, the refrigerator door, the door knob, the *taco de papas con huevo o frijoles con queso* that she wrapped into what Americans called a “burrito.” Her words in writing, her brief yet deep emotive notes, wrapped and contained me in my uncertainties as a child. Insecurities about whether her love was present when she was absent for work; boxing asparagus or tomatoes at the cannery, cleaning other people's houses, cutting up meats and cheeses at the Italian deli, learning how to read and write in English at night. She wrote me letters. She wrote me small notes in phonetic English: *ay luv yu*.

My mother wrote me letters to express her love, as well as her apologies when the intergenerational wounds of trauma from migration, displacement, economic uncertainty, tiredness and longing for home surfaced. My mother wrote me short and long letters, two or three words letters – and letters that, by academic standards, would exceed journal limits. I read those letters. I kept some of them in my pockets, in between books, and a makeshift treasure chest that now holds our bonds across time, space and place. I learned to write by responding to my mother’s letters and notes; responding to an inquiry, expressing gratitude for her blessings, and forgiveness for the hurt or harm. Our letters were the way in which we learned to connect, to reflect and amend: to love.

Letters Live Long Lives: Intergenerational Love-ing and Dissent-ing

There is power in letters. AUTHOR 2 opened our paper paying respect to the rich legacies of letter writing by feminist writers and thinkers, among them *Kartini*, who AUTHOR 3 powerfully honored. AUTHOR 2 and AUTHOR 3, like AUTHOR 4’s featured poem by María Guardado, in relation to our letters, MASKED’s response, and AUTHOR 1’s reflections on her mother’s letters, and the letters her *abuela* wrote with a needle and thread, remind us that letters live long lives.

Letters move. Letters travel. Letters cross boundaries, borderlands and bifurcated binaries. Letters live; they bond and build. And when they – the letters – move across time,

space, and place, they can move us physically, spiritually and emotionally. The letters we, as dissident women, have humbly offered in this paper move(d) us close(r) in a time when we are “together apart.” Our letter made us feel – it led us to reveal our reflections of a past dialogue, yet we have threaded our reflections of that gathering in relation to our dreams, longings, desires, and dissent in our present and our future. Our letters guided us to reveal. In the process of reflecting through our writings we have sought to thread together a *rebozo*, a knitted cap, a tapestry, to heal. Letters move, they travel, and in doing so they reveal and allow(ed) us to hear – to listen with the heart – as we attempt to heal.

Letters transcend and trespass; they also thread. They are the needle that weaves, *el hilo y la aguja*, our stories alongside the longings for connection, relationality and radical solidarities that are grounded in what is felt in body, bone and flesh, in the marrow of our soul. Letters connect and amend when words are lost, when we cannot express verbally or even physically what is felt. Thus, the needle and thread that is the pen and paper, the strokes of the keyboard on a blank screen that is a canvas, resurface words from the heart. The needle and thread begin to move. Letters move, reach, and live on unlike any other mode of writing.

They have the capacity to invite, incite and ignite reflection along with emotions and actions

(De Robertis, 2017; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Rosales & Rosales, 2019; White, Wright-Soika, & Russell, 2007). Your/our letters have rekindled the embers of our cold and wilted sensibilities in the face of perpetual assemblages of violence. Our letters are the salve with which we can, to some degree, be at ease. We are threading meanings and dreams into being.

We are *mujeres*, each of us of a different thread – texture, feel, color – and each of us *tejidas*, threaded relationally, humanly, and lovingly. We care for each other not because we have something to offer to one another, or because we are crafting and stitching together. We care for each other because we can see ourselves in full, because we walk together, even dance in dissent. We unravel the yarns of the academy that entangle us, not alone or isolated

but rather in the company/accompaniment of each other; we have no other ways to exist and resist the academy. Our relational decolonial love is our disruption against the erasure of our heart-soul-fist, our foremothers and those that came and will come before, and after us.

Letters are a mode through which we can reach out, lean in. Letters cross, perforate the boundaries of what is often difficult to say out loud and express. We can reach, extend and embrace the self with and within ourselves. What we wrote and what we offered, are our writings in letter form, speaking back and affirming to ourselves and each other how we resist. We resist the threads that wound, shackle and bind us, and we refuse being trimmed and knotted. We are threading/reading, we are writing/righting. The letters we have offered here are our letters of hope, love and dissent that what we have shared through these reflections circulate beyond the paginations of a journal, the academy and the positionalities that have been ascribed to us. Yet we affirm, know, see and feel ourselves as being, holding, carrying and threading much more than what we allow ourselves to show. We are piecing together these letters to invite you, dear reader, to thread with us with a needle of hope and a yarn of heart a *rebozo* that will hold and uplift.

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September 3, 2021

Dear Editors/Drs. Christopher Sonn, Rachel Fox, Mohi Rua and Sam Keast,

Thank you for your leadership in overseeing the process for the special issue on “Fostering and sustaining transnational solidarities for transformative social change: Advancing community psychology research and action” in the *American Journal of Community Psychology*.

We are pleased to re-submit our revised manuscript, which we have retitled as follows: *Dissident Women’s Letter Writing as Decolonial Plurilogues of Relational Solidarities for Epistemic Justice*. We appreciate the careful feedback, and we have attended to it with equal care in our revision.

In this letter we outline our revisions to the manuscript in response to the feedback provided by the Reviewers. We are grateful for the opportunity to review and respond to the comments and feedback provided to us by the anonymous Reviewers. We believe their feedback, along with your editorial guidance and recommendations, have resulted in an improved manuscript, which we submit for further consideration into the special issue.

Below we outline our revisions to the manuscript, given the Editor’s comments, and most relevant recommendations by the Reviewers:

- We value the reflections and mindful critiques provided by Reviewer 1 who offered us a better understanding of the other side: the reader’s experience. As we reflected and responded to Reviewer 1’s concerns in light of having not read nor viewed or participated in the ICCP—and in consideration of the masked manuscript submission, the challenges of engaging with the manuscript—we have removed, wherever possible, any decontextualized comments throughout the paper and in our letters in reference to the conference. We acknowledge the limitation noted by Reviewer 1 that assumes readers have knowledge of our scholarship and/or prior engagement with our ICCP panel, and our use of language that is metaphoric, and perhaps not very clear. In response to this comment we offer a few reflections, in addition to the mindful editing we’ve done throughout to offer context about our praxis, or remove anything that is too tethered to the panel that it would detract from the focus of our plurilogue.

- We believe that one of the values—and perhaps dissent, resistance and decolonial praxis—that our manuscript invites is that of providing readers with multiple opportunities for engagement, reflection and dialogue with our letters, and our scholarship/praxis. It invites, but does not require, that the ICCP panel discussion/presentation be viewed partially or in full to be able to center into our plurilogue through our letters. This is an offering to readers, and a kind gesture to connect as we continue to be distanced and apart amidst the ongoing pandemic. Particularly if people are going to “teach” this manuscript we believe the YouTube will be an expansive opportunity to engage with the ideas, epistemologies and ethics we elaborate. This is also our way of imagining the circulation of knowledge otherwise, as per the themes of our manuscript. Indeed, we value the Reviewer 1’s reflection that in writing their comments to us they were attempting to “enter into dialogue with our plurilogue”—this is precisely one element of our manuscript and writing that we sought to cultivate through this piece, and eventual publication.
- Reviewer 1 noted the limited context and history to describe Kartini’s letters. Therefore we have added a few paragraphs to describe how Kartini’s work and legacy continue to serve as valuable sources for political organizing and social movement building in Indonesia and beyond. We have also clarified her role in liberation movements specifically in regards to women’s rights and enfranchisement, and how through her letters she embodied dissent and resistance to her lived experiences—and those of many other Javanese women—being repressed, distorted and, as Reviewer 1 notes, being “incorporated into the precise nation state that she sought to up end.” Our revisions specific to this comment are on pages 9-11. By situating Kartini’s legacy and letters we introduce our letters of dissent and radical solidarities, writing on page 11 the following: “Inspired by Kartini’s letters of dissent and revolution, which resonated and echoed with the transnational solidarities we offered through our conference panel conversations on epistemic justice, herein we offer you the letters we wrote to each other. Kartini’s life and letters affirmed for us the power of letter writing for fostering solidarity and radically inclusive imaginaries. We join Kartini in this practice of dissent through our letters—we dedicated ourselves to stitching our work with and into each other’s projects.”
- We appreciated the recommendation by Reviewer 1 to re-organize the flow and structure of our letters. We have, as suggested, moved the critical questions up to the front of the manuscript so that they function as anchors for the reader. Beyond that, however, we believe that the current structure as we’ve outlined it—and in consideration of the editorial cutting and revisions we have made to other sections—that the current structure serves to honor the word-writing of each of us as authors. The current structure maintains the integrity of our individual stories and voices, while bring us together into a plurilogue that can be understood as a whole: as one conversation. We believe the current structure exemplifies best the community/collective and collaborative decolonial feminist praxis with which we’ve written our manuscript. We hope that the current version of our manuscript satisfies and better demonstrates our contributions toward epistemic justice within the discipline through an epistolary methodology that aligns with our narrative-based embodied praxis as demonstrates in our written plurilogue. In psychology we are just beginning to carve ways to appreciate multivoiced narratives—whether in policy or academic writing. We try here one “form” that moves us toward that end. We understand

it does not conform to the anticipation of a single voice but we hope we have scaffolded in a ‘good enough’ coherence for readers.

- Reviewer 1 observed that there were instances in our manuscript where we did not translate Spanish or Javanese terms, concepts and quotes. We have done this intentionally and purposefully to assert, affirm and engage in discursive/linguistic epistemic justice that recognizes the value of other languages in written and spoken form. The Anglicizing and English dominance that prevails in the academy serves to foreclose or gate-keep so many communities and knowers, produces and holders of wisdom and knowledge, and we do not wish to participate nor reproduce this by offering translations. In the areas where we do offer translation it is because these have been offered by the original authors of those phrases and expressions. We invite the editors of the special issue to consider what we are offering as a reflection here in our response letter, and to consider the implications of monolingualism in the Global North—which then informs what kind of knowledges circulate or are accessible (or not) in the Majority (non-English speaking) World.
- In addition to the comments offered by Reviewer 1 we greatly appreciated the specific comments, reflections and recommendations offered in the body of our masked manuscript. We respond to some of those inquiries below, and wholeheartedly appreciated the attention, time and engagement devoted by Reviewer 1:
 - On page 5, Reviewer 1 commented the following: “And to what extent, if at all, are you distinguishing between letter writing and communicating via social media and/or email? Those theorizing letter writing as source of data for analysis (see, e.g., several chapters in The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection, make such distinctions... not sure how relevant they are here?”
 - To which we respond with the following: “We believe what we’re striving to is to describe letter writing as a particularly emotive and powerful mode of communicating discursively and visually, where what is written is directed at a person or audience with a particular intention and purpose. The form of letter written is not performative nor expected, it’s not fleeting but rather it’s the kind of writing with which we may want to “sit” in/within for some time. It’s intimate, relational, and reflective. It requires affective and intuitive writing, with *corazón* and flesh! This significantly differs from social media writing that can become impersonal—and as noted in the comment offered by the Reviewer—performative for an anonymous audience. We communicated relating our love and desire to collectively forge new visions with our heart and senses.”
 - On page 6, Reviewer 1 commented the following in regards to our expression “stitching fiercely”: “This is a provocative methodological statement (if I may call it that). Might you explore/explain what you mean here? As is the letters feel more like a pastiche, pasting together different people’s reflections on their own and each other’s praxis w/o sharing much about what the praxis is. Or below you call this a bricolage... another naming of the processes... you may resist clarifying, which for those outside your plurilogue it is challenging to follow.”
 - And we respond with the following reflection: “We value the comment and understand the need to clarify and perhaps methodological name our process. However, we resist defining our process by any other method or approach other than what feminist women scholars have described as an

epistolary method, or a womanist-mujerista approach. Thus in response to this comment, we use the expression of "stitching fiercely" or stitching care-fully as purposeful to characterize our process and approach. The wording "stitching fiercely" is, in our view, also as evidenced in the structure of our paper. When something is stitched, it is by default being put together. And, when something is done fiercely, it is done by engaging bravery, courage, taking a risk, doing something with heart. This is not necessarily a "method" as Reviewer 1 interprets the phrase to be—this is a way of being, a way of relating, how we've come to be/together. In the present version of our manuscript that sentence now reads as follows on page 6: In this article we stitch care-fully a series of letters we have written to each other."

- We appreciated the comments and reflections offered by Reviewer 2 on our use of the term "evidence-based embodied practice." We acknowledge the limitation and problematic elements of such wording that would contradict or trouble what we have sought to do by offering a different otherwise, process and form of writing. We removed that language per se. In addition, to address this important comment we have added the following clarification on page 5-6, which reads as follows: "Letters stand in bold and bodacious contrast to academic writing. As Mik Billig in *Learning to Write Badly* (2013), and Sandra Harding in *Situated Knowledge* (1988) would argue, the voice of the academic scholarship is militantly singular, "objective" and passive (we added 'objective' as suggested). While many have contested these academic traditions, within our disciplines we learn to narrate from a God's eye view, a view from nowhere; we are disciplined to extract the word "I," remove all sticky traces of affect, erase clues of relationship and delete words that may reveal our desires or commitments. We worry this is what passes for "appropriate" social science academic writing: "evidence based"—no audience, no heartbeat; accountable to no one; form pre-determined; a pile of evidence designed to prove/convince "what is" rather than a gesture and embrace to provoke a sense of what else is possible, how might things be otherwise. We seek to decolonize academic writing in psychology so it has a pulse. Therefore we write in this epistolary shape and form to offer a view to advance community research and action with goals of liberation, decoloniality, and community wellness."
- Both Reviewers noted the length of our manuscript exceeding the desired page limit as per the journal's guidelines. With guidance from their comments and feedback we have edited the manuscript down from nearly 40 pages to 34, with the body of the writing and content being 30 pages in length. We hope that this is suitable. Cutting more would significantly compromise our writing and voice, and the disciplinary epistemological intervention we aimed to make by writing in this form. The areas that we have significantly trimmed are the following:
 - We have reduced the length of the letter provided by the fourth author, which is now approximately 4 pages and of equal length to the other letters.
 - We also edited the conclusion, which was formerly labelled as an "epilogue." The conclusion is now included under the heading "Concluding Reflections on Epistolary Writings Resist Erasures" beginning on page 28, and followed by a sub-section titled "Closing Our Threaded Plurilogue" on page 29.

- Additionally, both Reviewers mentioned the need to carefully edit the manuscript for grammatical clarity and language. Thus, we have edited the entire manuscript with much mindfulness and care to ensure that what have produced is of quality writing and structure to be accessible for our readers.
- Finally, Reviewer 2 recognized the value of our manuscript, and the intervention we aimed to make through this unconventional dissenting form of writing. We appreciated their reflection on how our piece offers a critique of the academy, and how our writing and praxis strives to offer a view of the discipline that can support goals toward liberation, decoloniality and community thriving.

We hope that our manuscript will be featured as part of this important special issue, and thus make a meaningful contribution to the discipline. Please let me know if you have any questions or additional materials are needed. Again, thank you for the opportunity—and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Jesica S. Fernández

cc'd co-authors:
Drs. Michelle Fine, Monica E. Madyaningrum, and Nuria Ciofalo

**Dissident Women's Letter Writing as Decolonial Plurilogues of Relational Solidarities
for Epistemic Justice**

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² A word about “absences.” In our conference panel, we were joined by sister/friend/colleague Dr. Urmitapa Dutta. Our ideas grew in conversation with hers’. While she is not an official “author,” her wisdom, drawn from collaboration with the Miya community, sits on these pages, even if she could not find the time to write with us. We include Urmi as a sister-in-inquiry, as she was with us at the conference where our words and maybe tears embraced. When we decided to co-author an article, Urmi responded—with regret—that she could not write now. And yet our insights and our incites are entwined as she prioritized carework and other fights: caring for students, family, and community; resisting institutionalized whiteness and its myriad manifestations; contending with unfathomable trauma, loss, and rage in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic in India. We are deeply appreciative of Urmi’s reflections and feedback on earlier versions of this article. We recognize her unwavering support as we wrote in community, connecting with her at various moments throughout our process.

Abstract

Braiding our words, “dissi-dance,” and desires, this article engages how various social actors, and communities—which we are a part of and belong to—challenge structural violence, oppression, inequity, and social, racial, and epistemic injustice. We thread these reflections through our written words, in subversive letters which we offer in the form of a written relational conversation among us: a plurilogue that emerges in response to our specific locations, commitments, and refusals, as well as dissents. Our stories and process of dissent within the various locations, relationships, and contexts that we occupy served as the yarn and needle to thread our stories, posed questions and reflections. Braiding, threading and weaving together, we animate deep decolonial inquiries within ourselves, and our different cultural contexts and countries. Refusing individualism—the illusions of objectivity as distance, the academic as expert, and the exile of affect and emotion on academic pages—we choose to occupy academic writing and ask: *What if academic writing were stitched with blood and laughter, relationships and insights, rage and incites? What if, at the nexus of critical psychology and decolonizing feminism, we grew an “embodied praxis?”* Unlike academic writing, traditionally designed to camouflage affect, connection, relationality and subjectivity, these letters are unapologetically saturated in care and wisdom toward a narrative-based embodied practice: decolonial plurilogues of relational solidarities for epistemic justice. Our plurilogue of dissent offers a view to advance community research and action with goals of liberation, decoloniality, and community wellness.

Keywords: dissidence, letters, epistemic justice, aesthetic awakening, oral histories, decolonial *mujerista* and womanist psychologies

**Dissident Women's Letter Writing as Decolonial Plurilogues of Relational Solidarities
for Epistemic Justice**

“Dissent is verbal resistance. It is the affirmation of our voices, of our worth. ...And, in fact, dissent is not unrelated to love. ...speaking love is an act of dissent.” (Carolina De Robertis, 2017, p. 7; In *Radical Hope*:

Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times)

Dear Jesica, Michelle, Nuria and Urmi,

Reading each of your letters did give a feeling of being wrapped in an affirming shawl. It was one among those few moments when I felt that I did not only use my eyes to read the words written but also with my whole heart and body. English is my third language. My mother tongue is bahasa Jawa (Javanese language). It is the language I speak in any context other than those that require formality, like at work, where I have to use Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian official language). So, with English and Bahasa Indonesia, I tend to feel that there is a sense of distance between these languages and myself. Therefore, with English or Bahasa Indonesia, I tend to feel that I speak and write mainly with my head. It is when using Bahasa Jawa that I tend to feel more cognitively and affectively connected to what I speak. However, it was not the case with reading your letters and writing mine. It felt as if I spoke and wrote in Bahasa Jawa.

Thank you. Terima kasih.

Monica

Oh, querida comadrita Michelle, your writing is always a testimonio of deep wisdom and love. It felt like pushing aside everything else to joyfully run to

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the mailbox and desperately open the long-desired letter that has magical power for our craving souls. In gratitude for continuing to ignite our most invigorating desires to co-create the otherwise.

Abrazos,

Nuria

An Introduction to Our Epistolary Plurilogue

Letter writing is a long and luscious practice of/by/for dissident women; a typically private exchange of love, pain, stories, struggles, desires and longings. The intimacies of letters can launch movements, as private details seep into public space, catalyzing political possibilities that speak structural truths and taunt dominant narratives. We are reminded of *Letters of a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs* (Lyons, 2007) and Smith-Rosenberg's 1975 essay, *The Female World of Love and Ritual*, drawing from diaries and correspondence among intimate women in the 19th century United States. We remember *Letters from Mothers to Daughters and Daughters to Mothers* edited by Tillie Olsen (1993), weaving 120 writers of prose and poetry crafting intimate pieces passed between generations, and are moved by Gio Swaby's recent exhibition at the Claire Oliver Gallery, *Both sides of the Sun* framed as a love letter to Black women's style and aesthetics. In 2019, more than 200 Latinx actors, activists, civil rights and labor leaders published *Querida Familia Letter*, in the *New York Times*, that opens with: "If you are feeling terrified, heartbroken and defeated by the barrage of attacks on our community, you are not alone." The tradition of letter writing is pointed and relational, an affective and collective capillary that entwines us across time and space. Powerful and usually outside the canon of academic social science.

Across media, time frame, historic context, a woman writes to woman/women, mothers to daughters, daring to speak into the world words/stories/*testimonios*/images held in

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the heart, chest, soul, too dangerous to be spoken but in need of release. Audre Lorde (1984) may have captured our practice as “erotic”:

[the] erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling. In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various source of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change. (p. 53)

So let us assume letters are erotic—unleashing power of unexpressed feelings.

Letters have been primarily, but not only (see Ta-nehisi Coates’ letter to his son, *Between the World and Me*, 2015), a practice by/for/with those who identify as women. Perhaps as women it has been/is always too dangerous to speak aloud what we are thinking, feeling, and holding, but a letter takes form when passions refuse to be contained. When “our insides jump, even as we may appear still” as Monica told us during one of our writing/reflecting meetings. Letters are penned in the ink of affect, pain, longing, connection; drafted for an audience, with a purpose and unapologetic intent. Once they sail out into the world, the writers can’t control the response, the receipt or the reverberations. The release is thrilling and anxiety gathers until we hear how/if they land.

We stand on the sweet and worn shoulders of women who dared to write—trans and cis, highly educated and barely, mothers who tucked notes into children’s lunch boxes, girls who wrote on bathroom walls. Those who came before and wrote before. These letters too often die with the women who receive, or they have been lost to his-story, erased/ignored, treated as if too messy or sentimental or the contents not “rigorous.”

Letters stand in bold and bodacious contrast to academic writing. As Mik Billig in *Learning to Write Badly* (2013), and Sandra Harding in *Situated Knowledge* (1988) would argue, the voice of the academic scholarship is militantly singular, “objective” and passive. While many have contested these academic traditions, within our disciplines we learn to

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narrate from a God's eye view, a view from nowhere; we are disciplined to extract the word "I," remove all sticky traces of affect, erase clues of relationship and delete words that may reveal our desires or commitments. We worry this is what passes for "appropriate" social science academic writing: "evidence based"—no audience, no heartbeat; accountable to no one; form pre-determined; a pile of evidence designed to prove/convince "what is" rather than a gesture and embrace to provoke a sense of what else is possible, how might things be otherwise. We seek to decolonize academic writing in psychology so it has a pulse. Therefore we write in this epistolary shape and form to offer a view to advance community research and action with goals of liberation, decoloniality, and community wellness.

In this article we stitch care-fully a series of letters we have written to each other. The letters reflect the relationalities we formed as co-panelists at a professional gathering, and the subsequent reflections we shared with each other through what feminist scholars have described as an epistolary methodology (Cisneros, 2018; Davies & Gannon, 2006; De Robertis, 2017; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; White, Wright-Soika, & Russell, 2007). Grounded in transnational relational solidarities of dissent and epistemic justice, our letters reflect a plurilogue of what surfaced among us at the 8th International Congress on Community Psychology (ICCP) conference panel on Creating Inclusive Cultures and Healthy Communities, where we shared our activist community-based inquiries nourished in solidarity with movements for justice and where we curated a transnational plurilogue about community research "with" not "on" communities and movements to which we align. Unlike much academic writing, designed to camouflage affect, pain, connection, relationality and subjectivity, these letters are unapologetically saturated in care and wisdom—embodied evidence. In the spirit of dissident women, in this article, Jesica, Monica, Nuria and Michelle have written letters to each other, *not outside the genre of academic writing, but within.*

With these letters we offer a journal the affects, solidarities, disappointments, rage, laughter and connections we embody alongside community-based struggles—our sites of activist research—and with each other. Refusing illusions of objectivity as distance, refusing the academic as expert and refusing the exile of affect and emotion on academic pages, we choose to occupy academic writing with a piece of experimental, multi-voiced writing. We remain ever-aware of a set of ghostly questions that haunt our critical community praxis and so we pose to ourselves, to each other and to you—our readers—a set of troubling questions, we will address for the rest of our lives:

On the *neoliberal academy*: We wonder if the university is worthy and trustworthy to hold the wisdom borne in communities of struggle.

On accountabilities: To whom are we accountable in our decolonial feminist praxis?
And then.

On *audience*: To whom do we yearn to speak/write/engage poetry, spirituality, theory, aesthetic provocation?

On *solidarities*: With whom are you engaged in intimate praxis of inquiry?

On *gendered violence*: We wonder, how is it possible—in every context we sit and accompany—we hear whispers of gendered violence? How do we understand that bloody stream of social life predictable across land/nation/class, and why are we always surprised?

On *wounds*: How do we speak of the suffering and wounds without reproducing a damage centered narrative, and how do we refuse the conflation of resistance/survival as if this were justice.

On *privilege*: We wonder why we don't conduct ethnographies of privilege to reveal the deeply unjust accumulations of power, wealth, control and the enactments of exploitation.

On *building communities* in hell: We wonder how we continue to build living/loving communities of sensing and feeling, inquiry and provocation, in institutions of state violence.

Across contexts and rooted in a decolonial feminist praxis, we write to and with each other, through emotion, connections, passion and vulnerabilities, across nation states and oceans, about inquiries launched in feminist solidarity *between* academics and communities in struggle. We enact a collective, decolonizing feminist epistemic bricolage. We document the resonances of oppression, resistance and love that shimmer across the Majority World and Global North. We share with you our archived letters as a cross-generational gift for critical psychologists yet to come. We are activists/poets/journalists/storytellers and researchers-teachers of communities situated in the borderlands with youth and families of children with disabilities in rural Indonesia, with Lacandón youth activists fighting for the rainforest in Chiapas, with immigration justice youth activists across the U.S. With frayed edges our shawl reaches deep into a women's prison in New York State to detention centers across the border. We begin this process to knitting our *rebozo*, *a shawl of threaded letters*, in honor and in remembrance of the long and generative history of decolonial feminist letter writing, specifically of Kartini's letters in radical moments of dissent, resistance and revolution—times of a past with relevance for today and tomorrow.

Grounding Our Process, Honoring *Kartini's* Letters

Fostering solidarity and radically inclusive imaginaries was the yearning and question that brought us together into a series of dissident conversations. Echoing the iconic quote from philosopher Maxine Greene, conversations may not change the world, but conversations may change the ways *we* think about *our world*. In the case of Indonesia, such a provocative conversation was embodied in the figure of Kartini, an iconic historical figure in the Indonesian women's movement. Kartini was born in Jepara, central Java on April 21st 1879

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to an aristocratic family that afforded her an opportunity to attend a Dutch elementary school. During the colonial era, the Dutch created a schooling system to produce low-rank colonial administrations. Instead of complying with the system, Kartini occupied the language of the colonizer to amplify her subversive voice. Letter writing thus became central to her struggle against the colonial oppressive systems of her lifetime in Indonesia: Western colonization, Javanese feudalism, patriarchy, racism and sexism (Kartini, 1992, 1995, 2005).

Kartini saw modern education as a liberating door for Javanese women to have access to knowledge, skills and occupations, which were reserved for Europeans and/or men. She envisioned living in a society where women could have autonomy and equal legal rights, and this served to further her ambition for pursuing higher education. Yet her dream was shattered when she was forced to leave school to follow the Javanese tradition of *pingitan* (being confined at home until her parents found a suitable husband). The sexism and gender double-standards limited her opportunities, while it benefited men, like her brother, who could pursue university education in the Netherlands. During her painful years of seclusion, however, Kartini used letter writing as a tool to challenge the status quo and fight against sexism. Written between 1899 and 1904, Kartini's letters documented her correspondence with friends in the Netherlands and the colonized Indonesia. Through letter writing Kartini found a means to cry out her despair and anguish, as well as her undeterred dreams of dissent and resistance to the colonality of gender. Through letters she exposed varied forms of oppression in Javanese society (Kartini & Coté, 2021). In one of her letters, she stated:

... it said that a knowledge of right and wrong is imbibed with a mother's milk. But how can Javanese mothers now educate their children if they themselves are uneducated? The education and development of the Javanese people can never adequately advance if women are excluded, if they are not given a role to play in this.

Develop the hearts and minds of Javanese women and one will have a powerful collaborator in that beautiful and gigantic task: the enlightenment of a people which numbers millions! Give Java fine, intelligent mothers and the improvement, the raising of a people, will be but a matter of time (Kartini & Coté, 2014, p. 811)

Although Kartini was detained in her own house, through letter writing she developed a progressive radical voice that gave life to her thoughts and desires, and that allowed her to reach and inspire others, especially generations of Indonesian women. Her letters were the megaphone she used to advocate for women's liberation, including equal access in education, which at the time was a radically inclusive imaginary no one dared dream or speak of.

Kartini's letters offer us an intimate, emotion-laden, uncensored personal documentation of embodied experiences of dissent, resistance and epistemic justice that can turn into powerful political statements through acts of compassion—reciprocal conversations across time and space, and among many. Her letters are an example of a plurilogue in writing that became a fundamental tool for building transnational solidarities in colonial and post-colonial times. Intended as personal communication, Kartini's letters became subversive texts that ignited greater acts of resistance. Indeed, so subversive were her letters that their publication was subjected to varied forms of censorship (Bijl & Chin, 2020). In fact, there was a period in Indonesian post-colonial history when the power of Kartini's letters was obscured from public awareness. Such an obscurity occurred during the New Order Era (1965-1998) when Indonesia was governed by a militaristic regime that was culturally sustained by a patriarchal system that glorified hegemonic masculinity and men's power in public and domestic spheres. During this period, Kartini's heroism was represented as a domestic role, as a devoted wife and mother (Bijl & Chin, 2020). Her political letters and voice were hardly mentioned in any school textbooks, thereby leading to her political agency

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and dissent being erased from society's historical awareness. Consequently, Kartini became a symbol of unquestioned complicity to the status quo, especially the sexism that prevailed in Indonesian tradition and society—the very system that Kartini opposed and wrote about.

Today, Kartini's letters are a political embodiment of dissent and resistance.

Four Letters on Dissident Radical Solidarities, Love, Refusal and Imagination

Inspired by Kartini's letters of dissent and revolution, which resonated and echoed with the transnational solidarities we offered through our conference panel conversations on epistemic justice, herein we offer you the letters we wrote to each other. Kartini's life and letters affirmed for us the power of letter writing for fostering solidarity and radically inclusive imaginaries. We join *Kartini* in this practice of dissent through our letters—we dedicated ourselves to stitching our work with and into each other's projects.

Queridas compañeras, Michelle, Monica, Nuria and Urmi,

I am inclined to begin this letter as I have been starting most of my emails and correspondence these days, wishing that you and your loved ones are healthy, well and cared for. I mean it every time I write it, and I am also desperately wanting to embrace each of you because so much has unfolded in varied ways over the past year or more, that I long for that physical connection that can only be experienced when in the embodied material presence of a dear long missed friend, sister, mother, grandmother, *mujer*, *compañera*—*nosotras*.

I have been piecing together this letter over the past days, trying to discern how to best begin to describe what I want to share with you. And how the plurilogue of threaded words and reflections still evokes for me what Michelle described as an “aesthetic awakening.” I would characterize our plurilogue as a multi-vocal intersectional conversation (Einola et al., 2020), and the connections and links we have continued to cultivate since then, as human and humanizing risings! Waking up feels passive, but *rising*—rising with the sun, the blooming greeneries of spring, the waves of trembling waters that clash and settle back.

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Your plurilogue is a friendship, a *comadrerismo*, that evokes human/humanizing risings in resistance to colonial violence; violence within and outside the discipline, the academy, the locations, places and spaces wherein we are situated and often (mis)placed by those who use power to structure the people's lives, yet fail to embrace reciprocal human recognitions.

Nosotras, the we and them, and the us, is a word that surfaced for me because as Gloria E. Anzaldúa describes it, *nosotras* is a linking expression of communality, mutuality, interconnections and reciprocal human recognition, *al estilo Fanon*. As I reflected on the powerful stories, provocations and words of dissent, resistance and refusal you all shared, I felt a connection to each of you as there was so much fullness in what you generously offered and provoked! What we strive to sow, till and grow among the communities wherein our collaborative research in action and practice unfolds and flows. Indeed resonating with what Monica described as living with purpose, *vivir con proposito*. Monica described how social care is fundamental to the Javanese cultural ethic of being of service to and with others. Specifically, of the importance of being acknowledged and recognized with the capacity to contribute to communities, and to be provided with opportunities to be of service—to be cared for and to care. To engage in social care, in a meaningful, authentic and relational way, is to live with purpose, intention and direction toward the betterment of communities, and society. This cultural value of importance and significance among Javanese communities, especially the disability community, affirms for me what my parents raised my siblings and I to practice consistently: *vivir para servir*. That is, about utilizing the privileged resources at our disposal—the tools and strategies—within our complex positionalities of power to privilege and reach and wield what is within our settings to support the struggles and desires of communities who may welcome or call upon us, in their own ways, to unite.

La union hace la fuerza, in unity there is strength; and it is in this commUNION of transnational solidarities that I was reminded of the importance of holding multiplicity,

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pluriversality and complexity, as not only a metaphor for a beautiful tapestry of *saberes entretejidos*, but a necessary *rebozo* to cloak us from the singularity, the narrowness and hegemony that often constitute, and continues to circulate within and outside of the academe. Nuria's journey into the voices of decolonial scholars from the Majority World that have contributed to decoloniality and decolonization affirms the expansiveness of knowledge, of *cosmovisiones* and *realidades* that are otherwise. *Pachamama* is us, *nosotras*. How we care for ourselves cannot be detached from how we care for our earth, and all non-human beings. Once more, I am reminded of the interlacing threads and bonds that hold us together, that sustain communities across tides of tension, and across generations, land, and dimensions.

To the youth that are witnessing and contesting the violence of this very moment—from *la Selva Lacandóna*, the rivers near the Beki river in Lower Assam, to the urban and rural streets in protest affirming Black Lives Matter, as do the lives of those whom are perceived as sub-human or lacking because of how our societies have hegemonically constructed what it means to be an “able-bodied” being. Indeed, from student activists organizing to decolonize the university to elementary, middle and high school youth calling for “police free schools.” The youth, advocates, poets, and formerly incarcerated women—they are the vanguard of change. In the jungle and river valleys, in the classroom, and at home and in the streets, they carry the torch to light and agitate for institutional change. And from here, from where I stand as an educator-accomplice/ally to dissenters, especially youth activists within the neoliberal university, and from whom I learn to co-organize/strategize, they keep the embers of my daydreaming and imaginations radically hopeful.

What would our lives be without the capacity to imagine, dream? What is lost by the death of envisioning and seeing, and therefore sensing in the soul-flesh-heart, something transformatively different from what is? The loss and death of freedom, and the struggle to claim, demand and fight for it. Michelle's experience with incarcerated women whose

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dreams of another reality are foreclosed by the limited opportunities to imagine, to dream and envision their lives apart, away and outside of where they are confined leads me to conclude that perhaps the greatest disruption we can wield and leverage is that of cultivating a radical revolutionary imagination to dream! Dare communities in struggle dream into being the conditions they strive and must exist in. It is not a matter of deservingness, of who can or should earn freedoms from the carceral state, but rather a recognition that emancipation and emancipatory praxes, like decolonial dreaming and imaginings, radical relational solidarities, and pluriversalities, are strategic moves that can lead to collective liberation.

Collectively the plurilogue among *nosotras* underscore the urgencies, and possibilities of epistemic transformative justice in action and practice. And, I add, across multiple-levels from the relational and communal, to the structural, political and cosmological, as well as domains and mediums, such as poetry, organizing, advocacy, stories, and policies. What I humbly offered in this letter are *sentir-pensamientos*, feeling/sensing-thoughts, that I describe as reflections on the kinds of “moves” I, we, *nosotras*, engage in as we pursue and engage consistently in dissident acts. In the dissidence—the dizzy daring double-dutch *doblepaso* dance—of disrupting hegemonic power, deconstructing coloniality and colonialism, and unsettling all that must not be nor continue to structure communities and lives: the racism, sexism, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, and more beyond naming.

Each of you, Monica, Nuria, Michelle and Urmi, through your praxis, ways of knowing and being, as well as responding to the amalgamation of oppressive power, exemplify Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s (2003) notion of “spiritual activism.” That is the recognition of the “sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings—*somos todos un país*” (p. 558). The work of love, of heart-soul, that you each engage in with and within your respective communities and contexts affirm for me that the spiritual activism that Anzaldúa described is not only possible but desperately necessary if we

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are to radically imagine and create otherwise, and anew more humane and transformative just conditions in communities and collectives in the present, and with and for generations to come. Let us continue in this rEVOLution where we sign on to embracing and enacting dissent as an imperative to decolonial liberation.

Abrazos,

Jesica

Dear Jesica, Monica, Nuria, and Urmi,

As I write I want to bathe in and also think critically about the kinds of transnational solidarities we breathe, bend toward, struggle to sustain, cherish. I want to resist romanticizing and yet in the midst of COVID19, it feels so good to be in conversation with you(s). As I sat to write this letter, looking for where to begin, I was reminded of a story about knitted caps in detention centers, that my friend/colleague/activist Andrea Juarez Mendoza told me. As a doctoral student/translator/researcher, Andrea traveled, with a legal watchdog group, to Dilley detention camp in Texas, where she met and translated with/for/alongside women and children seeking asylum, originally from Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala... There she witnessed sweet and bold solidarities nourished in hell. As some refugee women and children were leaving, and others staying, weeping/smiling/confused/holding hands across borders of state violence, those who were leaving wore the small caps of green and brown that the collective of women knit within the center. As they left, all sang, "*Si una se queda, todas nos quedamos. Si una se va, todas nos vamos.*" "If one of us stays, we all stay. If one of us leaves, we all leave" (personal communication, 2018, see also Mendoza, A. J. *A Nepantlera in the Academy: Sowing Seeds con El Hilo*, forthcoming). I wonder about the radical solidarities we stitch together and the knitted caps we wear when we are working in/with/alongside communities of struggle, and where we place our caps when we enter the academy. These questions of inquiry hatched in

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struggle, and then sustained across place/time/movements/writing/poetry/praxis, sit at the heart of my letter to you.

Sister/friends... As I listened to us, I felt a soft shawl of knowledge/love-soaked inquiry draped across a sprawling we. This shawl of epistemic justice, held by our 10 hands and many more, embraced the spaces where we each sit with/listen to/resist alongside/hold sacred and nourish counter storytelling. In our distinct sites of inquiry, we commit to hearing voices and lines of analysis long silenced, buried and clipped; we recognize these as forms of knowledge, challenging the belief that the academy holds a monopoly on knowledge (Fals-Borda, 1984) Together we bend toward emancipatory ethics as Monica speaks through disability justice and calls for a radical commitment to *silaturahmi*—to chat beside without pre-determined diagnoses. We are indebted to the stunning critical ancestry Nuria narrated, grounded in Indigenous epistemologies so that we may make the road [together] by walking otherwise. Nuria beckoned us to envision pluriverses, drawn by wisdom and epistemes of the Majority World, the Global South, engaged by the ethical and political obligations to humans/non-humans, building an ecology of non-capitalist solidarities.

Not surprising, but nourishing, we all spoke of love and our inquiries forged “with.” Each of us speaks/writes to challenge dominant and dehumanizing policies, practices, ideologies, enactments of state violence aimed at marginalized groups, people with disabilities, outsiders, insiders excluded within and the earth as we “perforate the official archive” (thank you Urmi), sit beside and refuse to intervene (thank you Monica), and offer up stories long silenced and buried (thank you Nuria). We animated our attempts to reveal the connective tissue of suffering, resistance and history to structural violence, dignity, and desire (thank you Jesica), even as we acknowledged that we labor in deeply contradictory spaces drenched in/threatened by neoliberalism, white supremacy, racial capitalist logics—otherwise called the academy. And throughout our sister-talk, across time zones and on distinct lands

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all trembling with state violence, racial capitalism, neoliberalism, environmental crises, and the relentless assaults of hetero-patriarchy, we were held/listened to/reflected back and encouraged by the activist scholar spirit of Jesica.

Since that evening, and again since watching, at odd moments, I can feel your smile, Nuria, float across my screen and into my heart. This morning as I was walking with my 17-month-old grandbaby Rosie to the park, I tried to imagine how you sit, Monica, beside families of children with disabilities, particularly at a moment of COVID-19, isolation, separation, and what comfort you must convey. And whenever I turn on the news and hear a Republican declare that January 6 insurrectionists were patriots, seared into my soul are Urmi's words: "Majoritarian stories rely upon strategic forgetting." That morning/evening/afternoon, we held each other, as we accompanied our projects and co-conspirators, co-researchers and comrades, as I imagine we try to curate "holding environments" (thank you Winnicott) with our students. In these enactments of fragile-aries (not so solid), we knit pluriversity, a public shared space where knowledges from the ground up filled our hearts and provoked us to imagine what else is possible.

Across our brief "tapas" of presentations, I could hear exquisite care and attention to the local, and an insistence on contesting the dominant gaze and violence on families of children with disabilities in Indonesia, and those who love and live in the rainforests in South America. I could hear demands for epistemic justice, appreciating the words/actions/poetry, sensing and feeling of those so generous to welcome us into their struggles. Together we wondered aloud: To whom/with whom/for whom do we write? To whom and with whom do we sit, alongside, in silence? How do we document the knowledge and practices already woven over generations by communities of struggle and survival, resistance and desire? What do we want to keep sacred and what might we speak back, to psychology and the academy, about the spaces/poetry/struggles seeping into our bodies? I felt warm and held by the

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connections stitched across, and laden with the weight of questions of accountability, provocation, and transformation across our varied sites of practice.

I am at once interested in the fragile and deliberate solidarities that Andrea found at the border, and the very different but also fragile and deliberate solidarities we forge across the academy as we dismantle illusions of objectivity and expertise, pierce the membrane between academic knowledge and the knowledge of struggle, culture, desire marinating on the ground in communities and lands under siege. And so for comfort, I turned to an old intellectual friend, French political theorist Chantal Mouffe, to think about how we might always honor the historic and current particulars of the local, and yet also make visible the capillaries of oppression and resistance, struggle and joy, that travel across. Mouffe calls these “chains of equivalence”:

I am not talking about abandoning particular forms of struggle. But when we talk about collective will, we will inevitably create some contradictions. That is politics. The chain of equivalence is about mobilizing people together through their different struggles—we call this a convergence of struggles. And creating a bond between those struggles in a way that recognizes the specificities of different struggles but also fiercely recognizing the commonalities and solidarities among the various struggles. (December 13, 2016, *The Nation*)

And so, I giggle to imagine that we too don knitted caps sitting atop our heads somewhere in the cyber-cloud above Melbourne (Australia) even as we commit to inquiry forged with movements for land and cultural dignity, disability justice, the earth, and for prison abolition.

I wonder when we will be able to hug...

Sending you sweet thoughts, friends.

Michelle

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Dear Jesica, Michelle, Monica, and Urmi,

...we will continue pursuing our denunciations to the national and international levels [in such forums] as the UN [United Nations] and OAS [Organization of American States] about the violation of human rights, and we will continue to denounce the violations to our human rights as indigenous pueblos. And that we do not want to continue being used as booty in election campaigns that profit from our poverty. We are in solidarity with the struggle that is being developed by our *compañeras* in the Yacaltecas Union of Women for their respect of their free determination in the election of their own authorities and the defense of communitarian institutions [traditional indigenous communal structures] ("Weaving in the Spaces," p. 139).

...We started with about fifty women and girls and we were able to officially constitute ourselves and start to get support. We were called Te Gunaa Ruinchi Laadi [Women who Weave]. This group still exists ("Indigenous Women's Activism in Oaxaca and Chiapas," p. 168). (In Speed et al., 2006, *Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas*).

I tried to weave my feelings and thoughts after reading your loving and encouraging letters and my clumsy reply, incapable of articulating the soulful *movimiento* in my heart. I sat in front of my computer screen just feeling, allowing mis *lágrimas* to speak on my behalf. I did not mind if my audience spoke Spanglish or not, disregarding the need for imposed translation in the monolingual empire, and avoiding academic language. Jesica, you gave me the necessary courage. Your powerful words invite us to continuously dismantle the empire, the hegemonic academy, troubling the status quo *comadreando*. You ignite my enthusiasm with love and courage *para seguir caminando*.

I feel at home with you, dissident women who are “weaving in the spaces” from *muchos lugares*. I feel deep joy and permission to confide what is brewing in my heart and migrant flesh. *Comadre/compañera* Monica, you dare us to rethink our positionalities in the hegemonic academy while committing to work with our communities with ethical accountability. I would like to share how painful it was to enter the academy in foreign lands trapped in-between languages, misrepresentations, pretensions, jargons, discriminations, insecurities, and equivocations. My parents wanted me to be educated in the Global North. I had to learn a different language and practice a new walk. Because of my short legs, I always had to catch up. There was never time, I always had to run. No matter how hard I tried, I was gazed at as an uneducated, sensual, and exotic woman in search of a European husband, a home, financial security, a fake reputation, and so on. But more than anything, I was expected to become fully white, to speak the European language without an accent, to cover my *pecas* and stay away from the sun. International government grants covered the costs of my education and required a secured return to my “salvaged land.” I was expected to teach others what I learned in their “civilized land” in order to promote progress and modernization. But it was a total failure. The conviviality with the Indigenous communities forged my deep admiration for their knowledge and ethical relationality with nature. It was hard to unlearn the lies of the West but as many dissident women declare, we must dare!

We come from various grounds but weaving in spaces we become aware of the pervasive colonial difference in our daily lives. It is not the same to enunciate injustice from the social struggle as it is to write about it in the academe. We know because we have been in both places. I cannot stop the inner struggle, the deep conflict, the constant question: “What am I doing in the ivory tower? Have I lost my way home to *el otro lado*, where *nuestras comunidades* speak a different language? I want to *palabrandar* with them, walking and weaving insurrect words, making roads otherwise, *sentipensando* in affective conviviality

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with them. Asking day after day, where are the meeting points of solidarity in our struggles for liberation? How can we conspire in the belly of the beast, the hegemonic academy and its institutions, to dismantle the pervasive racism, heteronormativity, ableism, white supremacy, decapitating the capitalist hydra, mobilizing resources, and finally ending the epistemic and political ignorance and lies written in academic textbooks? How can we manifest decolonial imagination into transformative embodied action? We must ask many questions because in times of trouble it is not about finding the right answers but constantly questioning what is taken for granted. It is about finding ruptures that create systemic dysfunction.

During the time I spent in affective conviviality with the Lacandón communities in the Sacred Rainforest of Chiapas, I witnessed in awe her powerful and rhythmic song, constantly reminding us of the insignificance of human existence. The Anthropocene diluted in her loving presence, permeating every breath, every pulse, and body movement with her rich biodiversity. There I understood her ancestral wisdom *con corazonar* as Indigenous knowledges can only be deeply comprehended with our hearts. For Indigenous cosmovisions, the Earth is testimony of the right for life. But this right is differently understood in the global discourse of universal human rights conceived by and for whites.

Comadre/compañera Michelle, you stir trouble raising the demands and solidarities of courageous incarcerated women against their brutal confinement that is only possible in the systemic decadence we continue to live in. You teach us how these women survive the violent attack of abuse and claustrophobic coloniality in their solidarity of resistance against the capitalist hydra and its weapons of racism, patriarchy, xenophobia, pathological greediness, emptiness, alienation, and despair. You courageously accompany them demanding the end of violence against them and their children. Their powerful stories forever tattooed their feminine, sacred power in *nuestras almas*: Yes, we can—*si se puede!*

Three dissident women from Abya Yala, Yuderkis Espinosa, Dina Gomez, and Karina Ochoa shared in their work entitled, *Tejiendo de Otro Modo: Feminismo, Epistemología y Apuestas Decoloniales (Feminism, Epistemology, and Decolonial Bets)* (2014) the *retos y tropiezos* when forging intercultural plurilogues with Zapatista women in Chiapas. One Indigenous woman said to them, “*Compañeras, su palabra es muy dura y mi corazón no las entiende* (Comrades, your words are too hard and my heart cannot understand them)” (p. 22). This transformative wisdom made them realize how coloniality is socialized in the academe, obsessively insisting in the abyssal difference marking one side of the line as “unintelligible knowledge” that needs to be reformulated with “intelligible academic jargon” in the other side of the line to warrant white supremacy and expand the legitimized arrogant ignorance (De Sousa Santos, 2018). But you, *comadre/compañera* Michelle, know how to talk with these dissident women locked in cruel prisons because of patriarchal abuse with soft words and open-heart weaving plurilogues of deep mutual understanding.

It is easy to forget the authentic commitment for anti-racist justice due to the seduced and devouring tentacles of the academy with the purpose of maintaining coloniality disguised as universal science. In contrast, you all show us how to authentically co-create intercultural relations with communities in struggle based on mutual recognition and dignified promotion of their own cultural language and identities—instead of the colonial lexicon and imposed exclusion of their beings. You teach us via the powerful resistance and emancipatory poetry that softens our hearts and sparks our bodies to imagine action against linguicide, genocide, epistemicide, and ecocide. Our dissident solidarities dismantle, disapprove, repudiate, contradict, and confront the hegemonic ivory tower and use it to center community struggles and social movements in our classrooms, based on our praxes. We learn from movements around the world that have been demanding the rights of Mother Earth, cultures and

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traditions, as well as the right for a dignified life, sovereignty, and autonomous cultural identity for centuries.

Comadre/compañera Monica, holding our hands against the colonial episteme based on race, gender, heterosexuality, and ableism, you courageously address the intersectionality caused by coloniality on dignified bodies that devalues and labels them “not “able” to serve the brutal capitalist hydra. You teach us how communities build cohesion and power to define themselves. You demonstrate how they co-construct the needed infrastructure for their everyday existence and political demands, imagining their world not as “the other” but otherwise. That is, a world in which their world fits. You sensitively weave solidarities with them and courageously dismantle the colonial episteme of difference and exclusion.

Dissident women from Abya Yala, Suarez, de la Hoz, and Yepez (2017), name plurilogues of knowledges with communities in struggle for antiracist, social, epistemic, and ecological justice as “*El Círculo de la Palabra: Entetejiendo palabra y Pensamiento Bonito* (The Circle of Words: Weaving Words and Beautiful Thought).” *Comadre/compañera* Jessica, you conclude lovingly our dissident plurilogue *entetejiendo saberes* in beautiful thought, imagining the not yet, and skillfully *corazonando* with deep sensitivity. Outside the hegemonic jargon, you loudly whisper our *chismes* to dismantle patriarchy, racism, heteronormativity, and ableism. In your work, you empower generations of students to stand up and demand transformative change in the rusted university by embodying decolonial pedagogy while holding a loving container for them to confront white privilege.

We come from diverse geopolitical localities and positionalities and have the common privilege of being in the ivory tower as well as with communities. Yes, we can build transnational solidarities against the capitalist hydra! (Sixth Commission of the EZLN, 2016). We must unite and conspire, weaving *nuestros rebozos*, like Jessica proposed, and joyfully raising our knitted caps, like Michelle proposed, opposing western hegemony in different

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forms. We denounce the white feminist savior complex as continuation of patriarchal hegemony that generates hierarchical difference as colonial legacy. We reclaim our womanist-*mujerista* (Bryant-Davis & Comas-Díaz, 2016) dissidence joining hands of many colors with *campesinas*, *artesananas*, *poetas*, *curanderas*, students, *maestras*, scholar-activists, Indigenous peoples, Black communities, people of color, women in prisons, people of marginalized genders, activists, migrants, *caravanas sin fronteras*, and dreamers from the North and the South. We build cartographies of insurgent subjectivities from different localities: Indonesia, India, the United States, and México. Let's unite our *corazones*, "stirring trouble and building theories in the flesh" (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Morawski & Bayer, 1995), *sentipensando*, *palabrando*, and performing dissidence in our classrooms and beyond. Resisting being called subaltern, we shall create, embrace, cry, sing together, hope, dance, denounce, dream, and dare!

Con mucho cariño and dissident love,

Nuria

Dear Jesica, Michelle, Nuria and Urmi,

While reading your letters, and writing mine, I was imagining that we were actually sitting across from each having a kind of interconnected monologue and plurilogue at the same time. I was imagining a kind of conversation where strengths and encouragements did not only come from our words, but also through our shared pauses and silences and moments where we couldn't really find the word to name the thought and feeling we were battling with, yet somehow, we felt that our friends/sisters could understand it anyway.

With each story of liberation and resistance we shared, our belief in the possibilities for and the power of solidarities and radically inclusive imaginaries were affirmed. The activism of Lacandóna youth sends a sense of hope about the possibilities of departing ourselves from the 'taken-for-granted fascinations' with the anthropocentric, paternalistic,

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colonizing, capitalistic ways of being that have disrespected and endangered our bio and socio-ecology. The shared commitment among women and children seeking asylum in a detention camp in Texas as well as among women/activists/researchers involved in the Public Science Project in New York, is an ‘aesthetic provocation’ for envisioning our shared quest for a more humane society. Witnessing the daring youth involved in the ‘police-free school’ activism reignite our belief that challenging status-quo is possible. And, it is from the determination of disability activists in Indonesia and families impacted by the stigmatizing-ableist society, I learn about the power of fostering collective critical consciousness as an avenue for surfacing and dismantling my ignorance of and partaking in the perpetuation of normalized dehumanization.

At the same time, however, as we travelled together from one story to the next, I couldn’t help but notice that the colonial legacies of being had become the heart-wrenching thread that connects our stories. In our shared stories, I found embodied testaments of what became the opening sentence of Jessica’s publication: “Coloniality outlives colonialism” (Fernández, Sonn, Carolissen, & Stevens, 2021, p. 1; Quijano, 2000). I was particularly drawn into what I read as the narratives of inflicted unworthiness. These appear to be the narratives that have also become the connected thread between my grandmother, my mother and my generation. My grandmother was born in the early 1900s, the last century out of three centuries of the Dutch colonization in Indonesia. During her teenage years, when she attended a catholic school run by a colonial missionary, she was baptized into catholic church. With this baptism, her belief in and practices of Javanese spirituality (the spirituality with which she was raised by her family and community) had gradually sidelined. In other words, her baptism was also a memento of how colonialism had set the parameter for what could be considered as a worthy or unworthy spiritualities. So, the narrative of inflicted

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unworthiness during my grandmother's era was in the form of people being undermined for not following the religions introduced (or perhaps imposed) by the colonial ruling power.

My mother was born in the late 1940s, the time when Indonesia was a young postcolonial nation. During her teenage years in the mid 1960s, when Indonesia was governed by the New Order regime, she witnessed what was considered as one of the darkest periods in Indonesian history. It was the time when political tensions and upheavals related with anti-communism happened in many countries and regions, including in Indonesia. During these years, hundreds of thousands of people associated or were accused of having association with the Indonesian Communist Party (ICP) or other leftist organizations were massacred, and 100,000 or more were tortured and imprisoned without any prosecution (Mulder, 1996). One of the dominant narratives used to justify this atrocity was the depictions of the supporters of the ICP as devilish atheists, therefore, it was morally mandatory to brutally exterminate those people. As a result, there was a political pressure for people to overtly express their religious identities and/or affiliations as a way of declaring 'I am not a communist.' During these years the narrative of inflicted unworthiness forced people to live their religions in ways that were instructed by the regime, otherwise they were at risk of being stigmatized as the enemy of the society or even being criminalized.

I was born in the mid 1970s. Like most of those who were born in this decade, religion was central in our upbringing, throughout our schooling years and eventually it becomes a major part of how we live our lives, relate to each other and give meaning to our existence and environments. Throughout my adult life, I have witnessed how religions have become a kind of political commodity upon which political tensions, intergroup conflicts and violence, as well as community segregations are built or even orchestrated. What comes next has been the depictions of religions as a key problem that has impeded the ability of Indonesia to be a progressive, modern, and democratic society. And with this, I experience

the cliché of history repeating itself. My grandmother's generation was undermined for believing in their traditional spiritualities, my mother generation has to bear a severe socio-political trauma for being forced to be religiously correct, and now my generation appears to be questioned and problematized for centering religions in both our personal and communal life. It was this kind of repeated story of inflicted unworthiness that also caught my mind when we were sharing our stories of liberation and resistance.

Dear friends, as my heart was full of admiration for the powerful resistance and solidarity enacted by the communities we are working with, at the same time, my mind was troubled by the lingering legacy of colonialism upon which the hierarchy of superiority and inferiority has been continuously maintained and reproduced. With this reflection, I found that Michelle's question about "the ethnographies of privilege" was really right on point. From the families and disability activists from whom I have been indebted for their 'aesthetic provocation', I learned that continuously reflecting on and having conversations around this question of 'ethnographies of privilege' has become a gateway for experiencing a consciousness-rising. Such reflections and conversations may help us gaining an awareness that (as academics/researchers/activists), we have maintained our privileges through what anthropologist Tania Li's (2007) calls as "the will to improve."

In the context of disability in Indonesia, this "will to improve" has been in the form of stigmatizing and patronizing research and interventions which position able-bodied persons in superior roles for abnormalizing, pitying, correcting and rehabilitating people with disabilities. Perhaps, in a way, it was the same with what my grandmother experienced. For her, this "will to improve" was in the form of 'saving people from false beliefs.' And, in the case of my mother generation, it was in the form of 'saving people from the danger of communism.' So, as the narrative of inflicted unworthiness is repeated, apparently, so does the presumptuous 'will to improve' myths.

With this reflection, it seems that interrogating the question of ethnographies of privilege, may have to be started by interrogating my versions of “will to improve” that have consciously or unconsciously guided my positioning and role as an academic, the studies and activism I am involved in, as well as the ways I relate to the university where I work.

Monica

Concluding Reflections on Epistolary Writings to Resist Erasures

April 22 commemorates Earth Day. A memorable day of ecological awareness and celebratory gratitude to our Mother Earth. A day in which we humbly immerse ourselves in deep reflection on our arrogance, greediness, and destruction. A planetary consciousness that “womanifests” our insignificant existence in the Anthropocene. It vanishes and merges with the soothing surrounding of ecological ontologies in relation with and in the Earth. This is one of the significant erasures and exclusions in the hegemonic academy. We barely engage in spiritual relation with the Earth, *sentipensando* and *palabrendo* to co-construct the eEcocene.

In our epistemic disobedience, we also note, as many feminists from the Global North and South have denounced, that our voices and contributions continue to be erased, shadowed, and appropriated by so-called “dissident men.” For instance, Rivera Cusicanqui (2012, 2018), an inspiring dissident and Indigenous *mujerista* from Bolivia, overtly stated that those who have become popular in hegemonic discourse on decoloniality are mostly men teaching in prestigious universities in the Global North. These decolonial scholars, she added, forget to acknowledge the contributions of women who are still struggling in the southern trenches in solidarity with communities and social movements. These are courageous women who many times risk their lives. We dedicate our relationally threaded letters—our epistolary methodology of disruption against erasure—to these dissident and courageous women’s contributions.

Committed community psychologists embrace values of social justice and inclusion. Yet the voices of rebellious women and all those labeled as “the marginalized, the oppressed, the colonized” are transformed into victims and excluded as agentic contributors of significant knowledge and praxes in our field. Our scholarly productions rarely invite activists to create and lead the discourse; to write the “herstory” that is known but difficult to see: the absent narrative that is erased and excluded from academic discourse. We, *mujeristas*, academics and practitioners, “womanifest” our commitment and transnational solidarities, our epistemic disobedience and resistance. In doing so we center the voices of dissent of revolutionary women for epistemic justice.

Closing Our Threaded Plurilogue

The letters we, as dissident women, have humbly offered in this article move(d) us close(r) in a time when we are “together apart.” Letters transcend and trespass; they also thread. They are the needle that weaves, *el hilo y la aguja*, our stories alongside the longings for connection, relationality and radical solidarities that are grounded in what is felt in body, bone and flesh, in the marrow of our soul. Letters connect and amend when words are lost, when we cannot express verbally or even physically what is felt. Thus, the needle and thread that is the pen and paper, the strokes of the keyboard on a blank screen that is a canvas, resurface words from the heart. The needle and thread begin to move. Letters move, reach, and live on unlike any other mode of writing. They have the capacity to invite, incite and ignite reflection along with emotions and actions (De Robertis, 2017; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Rosales & Rosales, 2019; White et al., 2007). Your/our letters have rekindled the embers of our wilted sensibilities in the face of violence. Our letters are the salve with which we can, to some degree, be at ease. We are threading meanings and dreams into being.

We are *mujeres*, each of us of a different thread—texture, feel, color. And each of us *tejidas*, threaded relationally, humanly, and lovingly. We care for each other not because we

Running head: LETTER WRITING AS DECOLONIAL INQUIRY

have something to offer to one another, or because we are crafting and stitching together. We care for each other because we can see ourselves in full, because we walk together, even dance in dissent. We unravel the yarns of the academy that entangle us, not alone or isolated but rather in the company/accompaniment of each other; we have no other ways to exist and resist the academy. Our relational decolonial love is our disruption against the erasure of our heart-soul-fist, our foremothers and those that came and will come before, and after us.

Letters are a mode through which we can reach out, lean in. Letters cross, perforate the boundaries of what is often difficult to say out loud and express. We can reach, extend and embrace the self with and within ourselves. What we wrote and what we offered, are our writings in letter form, speaking back and affirming to ourselves and each other how we resist. We resist the threads that wound, shackle and bind us, and we refuse being trimmed and knotted. We are threading/reading, we are writing/righting. The letters we have offered here are our letters of hope, love and dissent that what we have shared through these reflections circulate beyond the paginations of a journal, the academy and the positionalities that have been ascribed to us. Yet we affirm, know, see and feel ourselves as being, holding, carrying and threading much more than what we allow ourselves to show. We are piecing together these letters to invite you, dear reader, to thread with us with a needle of hope and a yarn of heart a *rebozo* that will hold and uplift.

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Dear Jessica, Michelle, Monica and Nuria

Special Issue: Fostering and Sustaining Transnational Solidarities

Guest Editors: C. Sonn, R. Fox, S. Keast, & M. Rua

22.9.21

Thank you for submitting your revised manuscript to the special issue of the American Journal of Community Psychology with the focus "Dissident Women's Letter Writing as Decolonial Plurilogues of Relational Solidarities for Epistemic Justice". We are pleased to inform you that we are prepared to accept your manuscript for inclusion in the special issue.

We ask that you submit the accepted manuscript to the journal's submission portal at:
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When you submit your manuscript, please include this letter of acceptance as your cover letter

Again, thank you for your valuable contribution to this special issue and to our field.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christopher', written in a cursive style.

Christopher on Behalf of editorial team

Re: American Journal of Community Psychology-Decision on your manuscript AJCP-D-21-00204R1

Jesica S. Fernandez <jsfernandez@scu.edu>

Wed 10/20/2021 4:25 AM

To: Nicole E. Allen <allenne@illinois.edu>

Cc: Fine, Michelle <MFine@gc.cuny.edu>; Monica Eviandaru Memadyaningrum <memadyaningrum@usd.ac.id>; Ciofalo, N <NCiofalo@pacifica.edu>

Good afternoon Dr. Allen,

Thank you for notifying us that our manuscript has been accepted for publication into the AJCP special issue! We're thrilled to learn of this official acceptance, and to learn of next steps to ensure our manuscript is included in what will be a timely and important published journal issue for our discipline. I will be attentive to the proofs and next steps as these come.

Kindly,
Jesica

Jesica S. Fernández, PhD (she/her/ella): Assistant Professor



Ethnic Studies Department - 500 El Camino Real, Santa Clara, CA 95053
phone | (408) 551-3295 - (831) 999-3757 (Skype)
email | jsfernandez@scu.edu
website | <https://sites.google.com/view/jsfernandez-phd/home>

"I acknowledge the Ohlone and Muwekma Ohlone people as owners of the occupied region on which SCU stands."

"The world, in spite of oppression, is a beautiful place." - Assata Shakur

"Examine the heart of those machines you hate before you discard them." - Audre Lorde

"... together, begin building spiritual/political communities that struggle for personal growth and social justice." - Gloria E. Anzaldúa

On Tue, Oct 19, 2021 at 12:29 PM Nicole E. Allen <em@editorialmanager.com> wrote:

CC: allyson7@illinois.edu

Manuscript AJCP-D-21-00204R1

Dissident Women's Letter Writing as Decolonial Plurilogues of Relational Solidarities for Epistemic Justice

Dear Dr. Fernandez:

I am pleased to inform you that your manuscript has been accepted for publication in the American Journal of Community Psychology.

Soon you will receive a proof of your manuscript accompanied by author queries that will need your immediate attention. Once you have approved this proof and answered any author queries,

your manuscript will be scheduled for Early View online publication and then assigned to the Special Issue on Fostering and Sustaining Transnational Solidarities Fostering and sustaining for transformative social change: Advancing community research and [action.in](#) the American Journal of Community Psychology with Guest Editors of the Special Issue Christopher Sonn, Rachel Fox, Sam Keast, and Mohi Rua.

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Many thanks,

Nicole E. Allen, Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief
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Mon 10/25/2021 3:10 PM

To: Monica Eviandaru Memadyaningrum <memadyaningrum@usd.ac.id>

Dear Monica Eviandaru Madyaningrum,

Article ID: AJCP12567

Article DOI: 10.1002/ajcp.12567

Internal Article ID: 17242027

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