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Elizabeth Coonrod Martínez

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This year we celebrate the 15th anniversary of Diálogo, with some transformation but remaining true to the original mission of publishing Latina/o voices and studies on Latina/o and Latin American experience. Scholarship on these pages has revealed trends, statistics and new thought in articles by scholars, together with the intimate words of the community itself. As the covers of Diálogo through the years demonstrate on our present commemorative cover, the journal has tackled and explored significant issues.

Brought forth in 1998 by the Center for Latino Research (CLR) at DePaul University (after the departure of early CLR Director Félix Padilla, who created the first journal of Latino Studies at DePaul), Diálogo was designed to welcome the work of a variety of writers: in the first issue, Editor Félix Masud-Piloto invited the contributions of scholars as well as community leaders, artists, and students.

We now return to goals of solid scholarship while also welcoming Commentary, Interviews, and creative writing submissions. We have fortified the peer-review process, changed presentation size, and moved to publication of two issues per year, beginning with this volume. The present issue represents a fascinating compilation of articles that explore the status of the contemporary “Latino,” a term both helpful and at times problematic in describing a vast population which is both native and diasporic, and yet marginalized and invisible in the mainstream mindset.

The opening articles are interesting analyses of Latino presence in the US: the first by Guatemalan writer and critic Arturo Arias, examines Central American-American experience in the US, their trajectory, work and military service, including analysis of three recent documentary films. The second, by Priscilla Gac-Artigas, assesses in US Latino literature the ideas of an early 20th century Spanish philosopher, to study the spaces of home and nation, an identity constructed from “circumstances” and “in-between-ness.”

Two lyrical essays in Commentary, the memories and histories of two talented writers, take us first to Chicago’s Puerto Rican Humboldt Park neighborhood during mid-20th century, to reveal a portrait of family and rich cultural legacy, where the same populations of 1960s’ resistance continue to evaluate their lack of recognition in urban society. The second essay takes us through the marginalized experience of Baja California migrants while highlighting the female experience, a richly drawn self as well as societal examination.

The new Interviews section is launched with an interview conducted with Junot Díaz before publication of the novel that would earn him the Pulitzer award. His comments offer insights into his influences and preparation toward greater writing. This interview is drawn from the Center for Latino Research’s oral histories collection.

The creative section explores diaspora, identity and loss through poetry experiences, the final narrative by Hilda Chacón representing a highly creative meditation occurring while in line at an airport, assessing the tactics and motivations of officials while reviewing the reactions of those who are interrogated. The meditation turns to society, the presence of garbage and disenfranchised people in the US urban setting, leading to critical analysis. This eloquent narration returns to ideas in the main section of this journal, Central American history and American experience, impacted by officials who have little regard for
human beings. The scholarship, moving commentary and artistic work of this commemorative issue not only brings talented writers and excruciating issues to consideration, it opens to rich opportunities for comparisons and reflection on community. With more articles than usual in Spanish, Diálogo continues to fulfill its desire to publish in both languages. If you are not fluent in Spanish, ask someone to read to you and explain some of the moving context.

We are honored and privileged to provide images from the recent exposition by Puerto Rican artist Bibiana Suárez, “Memory/Memoria,” a visual artist’s impression of life lived in constant transition between US and Puerto Rican culture. Our continued goal is to bring forth research and creative work on Latino/a experience (diverse groups and impact), based in local, national and hemispheric communities. Diálogo’s existence and production reflects a community in dialogue: the editorial staff, an Editorial Board of consultants, CLR Diálogo advisory board, and the significant resources and support provided by the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, and the Provost’s Office at DePaul University.

Please note the Call for Diálogo 16, “Cosmic Liturgy: Latino/a Catholicism.” The 2013 volume will be guest-edited by Dr. Peter Casarella.

Enjoy the excellent writing in this issue and please join us, as subscribers and contributors, as we enter our new phase of biannual publication!

As the editor creating this issue selected from submissions and by recruiting the lead article, I have sensed magic at work in the connections between criticism, personal experience and the highly inspiring writing. The contributors are scholars, students, teachers laid off by the economic system but who see hope and lessons for us from their students, migrants who find healing through family and customs, and strength of self. When I viewed the new exhibit by Bibiana Suárez, one of our CLR Faculty Fellows this year, I discovered her muses were similar, her inspirations connected to those of the talented writers in this issue. She graciously permitted us to also exhibit items from her new series, and our Design Editor, María Isabel Ochoa, has cleverly placed those images at precise junctures within the content of Diálogo 15:1, which will be fully appreciated as you read.