



Mexican & gringa education researchers: surviving oppressive governments, stories from a Mexican University

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Abstract: As researchers who had the opportunity to spend a year together in critical education scholarship at a public university in Mexico, we share our perspectives on how to engage oppressive governments in post-truth times. The researchers are Mexican and Gringa who recognize the contradictions, points of hope, and shared concerns toward dystopia through lenses of decolonizing work among young people in Mexico and the U.S. The authors draw into focus through critical reflexivity three moments of their shared time during the 2017-2018 academic year—two panel presentations and a moment of crisis, when the city where they lived had a municipal dump that was on fire for several days. They look toward the election of a left-wing president in Mexico who represents a very different breed of populism as a point of tension and hope, while recognizing circumstances may not improve. Finally, they regard the project of education as critical to their hope and continued work.

Keywords: post-truth, critical reflexivity, oppressive governments, comparative education

Resumen: Como investigadoras que tuvieron la oportunidad de pasar un año de educación crítica en una universidad pública en México, gracias a una beca, compartimos nuestras perspectivas sobre cómo involucrar a los gobiernos opresores en tiempos de posverdad. Las investigadoras, una es mexicana y la otra es gringa, reconocen las contradicciones, los puntos de esperanza y las preocupaciones compartidas hacia la distopía, a través del lente decolonizador entre los jóvenes de

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México y Estados Unidos. Las autoras enfocan este texto, a través de la reflexividad crítica en tres momentos de su tiempo compartido durante el año académico 2017-2018 : dos paneles de presentación y un momento de crisis, cuando en la ciudad donde vivían un basurero municipal permaneció en llamas durante varios días. Miran hacia la elección de un presidente de izquierda en México que representa una clase muy diferente de populismo, como un punto de tensión y esperanza, mientras reconocen que las circunstancias pueden no mejorar. Finalmente, consideran que el proyecto de educación es fundamental para sostener la esperanza y el trabajo continuo.

Palabras clave: posverdad, reflexividad crítica, gobiernos opresores, educación comparada

Résumé : En tant que chercheuses ayant eu l'opportunité de passer une année d'éducation critique dans une université publique au Mexique, grâce à une bourse, nous partageons nos perspectives sur la façon d'impliquer des gouvernements oppressifs à l'époque de la post-vérité. L'une des deux chercheuses est Mexicaine et l'autre est *gringa* ; elles reconnaissent les contradictions, les points d'espoir et les inquiétudes partagées face à la dystopie, à travers l'angle de la décolonisation parmi les jeunes du Mexique et des États-Unis. Dans le texte qui suit, les deux auteures mettent l'accent sur trois moments qu'elles ont partagé pendant l'année académique 2017-2018, à partir de la réflexivité critique. Deux panneaux de présentation et un moment de crise quand dans la ville où elles habitaient, la décharge municipale a été en feu pendant plusieurs jours. Bien qu'à leurs yeux, l'élection d'un président de gauche au Mexique représente un populisme (point de tension et d'espoir) très différent, celui-ci, au vu des circonstances pourrait ne pas apporter d'améliorations. Enfin, elles considèrent que le projet d'éducation est crucial pour soutenir l'espoir et un travail continu.

Mots clés : post-vérité, réflexivité critique, gouvernement oppressif, éducation comparée

Resumo: Como pesquisadores que tiveram a oportunidade de passar um ano em educação crítica em uma universidade pública no México, graças a uma bolsa de estudos, compartilhamos nossas perspectivas sobre como envolver aos governos opressores em tempos pós-verdade. Os pesquisadores, uma mexicana e outra gringa reconhecem as contradições, os pontos de esperança e compartilharam as preocupações sobre distopia através das lentes de descolonização entre os jovens do México e Estados Unidos. Os autores abordam este texto por meio da reflexividade crítica em três momentos de seu tempo compartilhados durante o curso acadêmico 2017-2018 : dois painéis de apresentação e um momento de crise, quando na cidade onde moravam havia um aterro municipal que ficou em chamas por vários dias. Eles assistem à eleição de um presidente de esquerda no México, que representa um populismo muito diferente, como ponto de tensão e esperança, embora reconheçam que as circunstâncias podem não melhorar. Finalmente, eles consideram que o projeto educativo é fundamental para segurar a esperança e o trabalho contínuo.

Palavras chave: pós-verdade, reflexividade crítica, governos opressores, educação comparada

The U.S. has always been a country that supports terror and genocide (Chomsky, 2013), yet at the same time has been a voice for democracy and freedom. This contradictory reality has taken a shift in the era of post-truth (Rosenzweig, 2017) when U.S. President Trump not only regularly maligns the one institution that has helped check power in the U.S. but also even tells the world not to *believe* these sources that have served to check power (Croucher, 2018). How is one to reconcile the dissonance and discomfort that comes with a frontal assault on the truth from the highest source of authority in one's country?

In this essay, we share insights from the lived experiences of how Kasun, a gringa invited pre-service teacher faculty member (we use gringa intentionally to connote a white U.S. person, and we recognize the term is fraught and appreciate that it is in self-defining), leaned into Alfaro-Ponce, her Mexican faculty colleague, while she was on a year-long Fulbright research and teaching fellowship in Pachuca, Mexico. This essay examines the shared power and the ways two critical women faculty who educate future teachers crossed real and metaphoric boundaries toward the fraught labor of creating decolonial work and lives. Alfaro-Ponce is an intercultural educator from a working-class background in Mexico who is research faculty at the Mexican State of Hidalgo's most prestigious university. Kasun is a white, working-class origin scholar whose work advocates for equity and border-crossing in a large public university in Atlanta, Georgia. Both are bilingual and raising their two respective children to learn to live in different countries and embrace intercultural realities; this child-rearing is just as important, if not more so, than their scholarship.

Kasun's Fulbright award started seven months after Trump began his presidency and served her, in part, as a massive reprieve from the daily dissonance of living within the borders of a country whose discourse was rapidly shifting. While at the same time in Mexico, the presidential election campaign for 2018 was underway--always creating a period of social and political anxiety during the country's six-year cycles. It also served as an opportunity for these two researchers to build transnational collaborations that are resistant to the post-truth ethos which may be growing on the world stage.

This essay describes insights from 2017 to 2018 in Mexico regarding the survival of (un)truth through the lenses of a gringa conducting educational research after Trump's election and a Mexican faculty specialist in intercultural education. We document making sense of how the vast majority of Mexicans have used survival strategies for generations to (dis)engage oppressive local and federal governments [where officially over 33,000 in Mexico are "disappeared," a number others argue needs to be multiplied to reflect reality by a factor of six, (Gaviña, 2018)] as well as Mexicans' clarity about the histories of their neighbor to the north (a clarity often lacking among people who are from the U.S.). We also document our year-long conversation as global educators working to make sense of shifting global conditions while educating about them, especially the assault on truth more newly emanating from the U.S. Both authors agreed with Peters (2017), about that the Post-truth era— It is not just influencing in politics; but also, in other aspects of life - like the case of education- "as a burning issue." In this instance, we both argue that education has a fundamental role and responsibility in the development of a critical thinking based on sciences and traditional knowledge that are capable of fighting against the interrupted truth. Our conclusions point to the need for a global response rooted in a vision of the collective good, one in which various forms of meaningful education oriented toward the truth to thrive and survive.

Background

The researchers write from the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo (UAEH), situated in the state's capital—the medium-sized city of Pachuca. This central-Mexico state was a historic stronghold of the country's main political party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI, as indicated in Spanish) and maintains a cultural conservatism usually associated with the PRI. Hidalgo was, until the last elections (July, 2018), one of the strongest bastions of the party where the power structures were based on authoritarianism. The state and the party evolved from the old cacicazgos to the hegemony of bureaucratic families and political groups that control, historically, the local powers (Vargas, 1990).

It is important to mention that, even nowadays, the current relations between the local government and university are delicate. In order to understand this often bitter relationship, we explain that the University is an autonomous Institution, and it is the oldest and largest university in the state. The UAEH provides educational services throughout the state. In addition, around 90% of research in the state is done at UAEH. Over the last two decades, relations between the university and the state government have grown increasingly tense, and it is related to political factors of control over the state. In spite of the logical relation that both institutions - the state government and University - are supposed to have, they have been struggling with each other for co-opting political spaces. By the time of Kasun's arrival, the political environment was quite tense. The university went through a protracted strike of nearly three weeks, and the state government offended the University community with its comments to the media. The media receive a special budget from the state government, consequently, there is no media opposition to the governor. This creates a phenomenon of, shall we say, interrupted truth.

The UAEH has had over 50,000 enrolled students, and as co-authors, we each worked in the English teacher preparation program, though Alfaro-Ponce only marginally, as most of her research and teaching are situated in the political science department. Ironically, we first got to know each other because Kasun was unable to navigate the Mexican immigration system, and a mutual colleague suggested Alfaro-Ponce contact her because in the past she had helped many visiting scholars to sort out their immigration papers. Tearful more than once, Kasun learned to lean into Alfaro-Ponce for her valuable help to navigate the system as well as the sense of "confianza," trust, that she sensed because of Alfaro-Ponce's genuine efforts to help and care. Because Alfaro-Ponce had completed part of her doctoral work in Poland, with her entire family in tow, similar to Kasun's situation in Mexico, she was able to be exceedingly sympathetic. The authors eventually found affinities in their work and lives as critical scholars of education, as mothers trying to raise aware and global citizen children, and as collaborators in multiple projects, including trying to educate toward consciousness globally among their students and beyond.

Kasun has a background as a bilingual white woman who has engaged Chicana feminism (Calderón et al., 2012; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Kasun, 2016) and postcolonial theory heavily in her work (Said, 1979; Todorov, 1999; Kasun, 2013; 2016). Alfaro-Ponce is a Mexican intercultural educator whose work engages intercultural epistemology (Stavenhagen, 2000; 2001; Dietz, 2017; 2018; González & Alfaro-Ponce, 2015) with its recognitions of the importance of postcolonial theory (Dussel, 1994; 2016; Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992; De Sousa Santos, 2006; 2010). Together, we recognize Chicana feminism presents a useful bridge to make sense of the U.S.'s postcolonial positioning. The framework connects to immigration, perceptions of the U.S. beyond the official myths of "nation-building," notions of

survival, as well as complex language identities (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Villenas, 2012). We also recognize a material need for decoloniality, due to the multicultural diversity and historic positioning of indigenous people in Mexico, the U.S., and the world over, where colonial education and policies are not serving these groups made vulnerable as a direct result of coloniality (Mignolo & Walsh, 2019). We borrow Pérez's definition of decolonial imaginary to situate our historical read of postcoloniality and our historical need for an alternative futurity:

I locate the decolonial within that which is intangible. Here the imaginary conjures fragmented identities, fragmented realities, that are “real,” but a real that is in question... where kaleidoscopic identities are burst open and where the colonial self and the colonized other both become elements of multiple, mobile categoric identities. The oppressed as colonial other becomes the liminal identity, partially seen yet unspoken, vibrant and in motion, overshadowed by the construction of coloniality, where the decolonial imaginary moves and lives. One is not simply oppressed or victimized; nor is one only oppressed or victimizer. Rather, one negotiates within the imaginary to a decolonizing otherness where all identities are at work in one way or another.

We thus see great agency in the space of liminality of the “oppressed,” while recognizing these identity categories are not static. Indeed, the analytic helps us make sense toward solidarity among a U.S.-based researcher and a Mexican-based one--a theme which we explore as a core thread in our following narratives.

We also foreground the material reality of the neoliberal condition, recognizing the re-ordering of citizenships, including the “technoethical” concerns, those that link the increasingly technological world we live in with ethical issues--related to those who live at “bare life” conditions (Ong, 2007). Bare life is the near or actual slavery form of living, and it has existed within the U.S.'s contemporary sweatshops and in most other countries as well (Ong, 2007). Ethnic/racialized positionings relate to modes of production, modes of control, and the shifting role the state has in its policies and reactions, alongside global companies and humanitarian efforts; the outcomes of which are not always predictable (Ong, 2007); these ideas are reflected in the way in which government and people are organized through social structures. However, we have seen in Mexico and Latin America a diversity of expressions and intent from some indigenous groups and organizations to work critically toward decoloniality. Decoloniality is related to the fight against coloniality, a concept that is helpful to understand the current pattern of power, the most profound and lasting expression of colonial domination and it was imposed to the entire population of the planet (Quijano, 2002: 4).

Through critical reflexivity, (Marx & Saavedra, 2013; Pérez & Saavedra, 2017; Pillow, 2003) we explore our own positioning as part of the re-telling of my experiences and insights into the nexus of truth-post-truth. By critical reflexivity, we refer to how we engage our own narratives through the lenses of power and questioning our assumptions and our respective positions of power (Saavedra & Salazar Pérez, 2017). For instance, Kasun always knew she could and would return to the U.S., and she recognizes the privilege of systematized higher wages available there--an unequal balance in terms of financial capital. Ironically, however, she and Alfaro-Ponce had lengthy discussions wherein Kasun seriously considered how to relocate her family to Mexico to raise her children there on a Mexican income. In this way, Alfaro-Ponce's insider knowledges about the university system provided a kind of cultural

capital in a unique system to which Kasun would be a perpetual foreigner. The following, better-illustrated vignettes serve to illustrate, and then we theorize implications.

Transnationalism: Social & political implications on both sides of the border, an international conference panel

In our efforts to educate we formally and informally advised many undergraduate and graduate students. Some helped us conduct research; others participated in international conferences and co-wrote with us. In March 2018, Alfaro-Ponce asked Kasun if she was interested in participating in the International Image Festival of the UAEH, the annual, high-profile research conference hosted by the institution, whose conference theme was borders. Alfaro-Ponce's expertise in transnationalism and her current work with students from Political Science were particularly important for the panel. The Panel was an important academic space, because both authors would have the opportunity of discussing these topics with over 400 students and scholars regarding our work on transnationalism.

On the panel, we found the students' questions to be indicative of concerns regarding modern identities and questions of power. First, we note that students from the political science academic area formulated questions about the right to vote abroad, which is a right approved in 2005 in Mexico. According to the data discussed in the panel, the participation of Mexicans abroad historically is low and limited. One offered this question: "Why were there such a low number of Mexicans abroad that were not exercising their right to vote in Mexican federal elections?" We recognize in our response the embedded survival strategies of Mexicans' engagement of the political structures. For Mexicans abroad, their sense of identity is often strongly Mexican, but their sense of agency in the massive power structure of the greater country is more limited.

In this context as a result of this limitation and for reasons of political legitimacy in Mexico, as well as good treatment of citizens who have left the country, it seems urgent to design strategies to increase electoral participation from abroad (Emmerich, 2013, p.87). Mexicans send generous remittances and an abundance of care over the border into Mexico from the U.S. every day, but they do not necessarily work to unharness embedded structures of impunity and corruption. Indeed, on several levels, Mexicans outside Mexico feel they have escaped, to some extent, these structures.

We then fielded additional questions regarding identity. Another student stood, "What will become of the Dreamers now that you have this president?" The student referred to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipients (Burleigh, 2017; Wong, Sánchez Gosner, Foerster Luu, & Dodson, 2018). Kasun felt the metaphorical weight of her passport, which allows passage to almost any country in the world with few questions asked, particularly in her white skin. She felt a heaviness--how do you in a public space answer questions about something so inane as artificial borders, with such real consequences on the flesh of billions of people (Anzaldúa, 1987; Moraga, 1981)?

This question was more than transcendent, especially because it was a unique opportunity, for the students and academicians that attended the panel, to face the reality of Trump's administration through the eyes of the visiting "gringa." First, because of the Mexicans' broadly negative opinion about the President of the United States, which according to a Pew Research Center 2017 survey, 65% of Mexicans expressed a negative perception, (Villegas, 2017) and, second, because of the

understanding of a xenophobic environment in the neighboring country (Cabrera, 2017). Finally on top of that, we need to add the concerns of a large number of students, because at least between the vast majority of the attendees raised their hand to the question, “Who has family or friend in the USA?” These questions were not merely academic; they were also as deeply as personal as they were transnational.

“I am not optimistic the U.S. Congress can find a solution for the 800,000+ courageous young people who have come out of the shadows with the promise of legalizing their statuses in the U.S.,” Kasun said. A weak response to what her president had made an impossible issue. This, to Alfaro-Ponce, was a new menace of power testing human endurance from holding a belief of belonging to casting it all into doubt. Kasun recognized how the U.S. government had failed to hold a promise, a marker of what we consider truth. A federal promise in the U.S. was undone as quickly as the presidential branch of the government ordered the permits would no longer hold. As co-authors, we recognize a new testing of human limits insofar as the ultimate authority--the state--withdrew its support and legal status. In this regard, we cannot prescribe remedies but only hope for depths of human resilience Mexicans (and others) have been demonstrating for centuries.

The burning dump

A municipal dump started burning and leaving a toxic cloud across the city on a Saturday in May 2018 (Mota, 2018), which locals eventually theorized it was to burn evidence of improper chemical disposal. In contrast to the pervasive odor of burning chemicals, there were scant news reports about the incident in the medium-sized city. There were no official statements by scientists at the university nor clear indications regarding what was happening other than broad pronouncements of, “We are cleaning it up.” The government canceled all school days until the dump stopped burning on Thursday afternoon.

But by Tuesday morning, after Kasun’s seven-year-old threw up, she quickly gathered her family to go to nearby Mexico City to breath better. The two co-authors were describing the situation as Kasun taught what would be her final class at the UAEH that week on Tuesday morning, via WhatsApp, a texting application used in most of the world outside the U.S. (translation of their lightly edited bilingual conversation follows in italics):

Alfaro-Ponce: Está horrible no es posible que han pasado 4 días y no pueden controlar esto.

This is horrible it’s not possible that 4 days have passed and they can’t control this.

Kasun: por mi casa salí a las 7:30 y me espantó lo que olí... con eso dije me voy. Siento una culpabilidad aparte... tengo el lujo de huir

I left my house at 7:30 and what I smelled frightened me... with that I said I am leaving. I feel guilty... I have the luxury of leaving.

Alfaro-Ponce: Sí, la verdad es que no son condiciones para vivir el tener este humo tóxico

No sé por qué no han declarado contingencia. Ya escribí al gobernador pero no da respuesta

The truth is these are not conditions for living, having this toxic

fog. I don't know why they haven't declared a state of emergency. I have written the governor but there's no response.

Kasun: the students r just sitting here como si nada
I feel like I am the crazy one. The level of cognitive dissonance
for me is making me feel NUTS

Alfaro-Ponce: El problema severo es que hemos normalizado
cosas como éstas
The severe problem is that we have normalized things like this.

What we probably observe is the person *normally outside the context* was seeing the issue with greater clarity. No one should have breathed the toxic cloud. Social media contained memes, people in gas masks that said, "I'm going to the local store, need anything?" Surely as it turns out, Kasun found a similar situation had occurred in her home state of West Virginia of burning plastics (and who knows what else) just months before. People in West Virginia, too, appear to have "waited it out" rather than fleeing (Achten, 2017).

Alfaro-Ponce shares insights of a political wager the university was possibly making at the time. We can say that the university was slow to offer any comment on the subject; however, we need to understand the political moment. At that time, nine leaders of the University were running as candidates for local and federal positions, These leaders were all running under the "Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional," Movement of National Regeneration, (MORENA) party, with the leadership of Andres Manuel López Obrador (referred to in the press and by political allies as "AMLO") the possibilities of winning were strong. Their candidacies further activated the opposition of the state government to the university, and also revived a heated public discussion regarding if the university should keep its "autonomy."³ Owing to the fact that there was a still a fight between the UAEH and the state government, it is possible to say that UAEH chose to maintain a low profile during the burning dump.

Alfaro-Ponce stayed behind in Pachuca to participate in an indigenous knowledge conference being hosted by the UAEH. This conference was programmed at least four months before, with the collaboration of el Centro de la Raza of University of New Mexico (UNM) and local indigenous collectives (some of them, indigenous graduate students of the UAEH). The conference received a delegation form UNM Students and professors among them interested in the International Fair of Indigenous Cultures (FICI). The dump started to burn the weekend before the fair, and the UNM delegation arrived that weekend, no one knew about the situation yet. For university timing, it was almost impossible to cancel the Fair, and the university authorities relocated the gathering place where the activities were programmed. We noted the irony of exposing indigenous scholars and scholars who do work related to indigeneity to--further toxins. Finally, Kasun had wanted to attend, but she chose to take her family to a place to her that seemed far safer; because conditions, regarding the air, were terrible.

³ In 2017, before the strike of February 2018, (Mota, 2017) the university had been fighting against the local congress, which is controlled by the governor, in federal courts, because the state government wanted to modify the organic law in a clear violation of UAEH autonomy.

Panel presentation on post-truth times

Alfaro-Ponce, Kasun, and a panel colleague had lunch after presenting about their research in May 2017 and how it relates to a post-truth world at a Mexican university in Hidalgo. Each of them had a pointed vision of helping to both raise awareness about engaging post-truth times and called on the young people of the audience to action. In the panel, Alfaro-Ponce had explained how the Mexican government interprets Post Truth, and she presented different examples of it in Mexico.

In Mexico, the phenomenon of post-truth is something that has been occurring since the very beginning of the Mexican State, however, in recent times there have been several situations where the government shows information where half of it is truth and the other is rather blurry, the example is the corruption in the institutional sphere. As a result of this situation, violence is a branch that has arisen in Mexico, while media show some entities violence, they hide some others. Alfaro-Ponce explained some specific cases and at the end, she opened a time for questions; some of the participants were focused on the lack of information and security.

The students could recognize that even they were at risk. Local governments do not report clearly about violence in that city, so students have felt afraid for their lives while going to the university. There have been officially reported cases of students being raped within three blocks of the entrance--more than once in recent years; as a result, the students tried to demand for better security conditions with the local government by asking them to provide more security, in such areas, where the incidents have occurred. Sadly, and to our surprise, the students referred that the administration had cautioned faculty against agitating with the local government for more police presence since the university has a "bad relations with the current state government." After this terrible revelation, Alfaro-Ponce, during the panel, challenged the young people:

Ustedes deben de organizarse sobre las formas de violencia que todas y todos sufren en su trayecto a la Universidad, sin duda uno de los problemas más grandes, es que han silenciado estas experiencias y en consecuencia no han tenido empatía con sus compañeras y compañeros que han sufrido algún tipo de violencia. ¿Cuántos de ustedes se han manifestado con las autoridades municipales sobre los asaltos y violaciones en la zona ?El problema es ése que no se manifiestan, por lo que no reconocen sus propios derechos.

You all must organize yourselves related to the forms of violence you are all suffering in your trajectory through the University. Without a doubt, one of the biggest problems is that they have silenced these experiences and as a consequence, you haven't had any empathy with your peers who have suffered any sort of violence. How many of you have protested against the municipal authorities about the robberies and rapes in the area? The problem is that you aren't protesting, and that you don't recognize your own rights.

Kasun sat wondering, "What if this agitation leads to death?" On the other hand, what else can and must we do when people are already dying--whether directly, or metaphorically, or through the tacit terror of targeted violences? Alfaro-Ponce shares these concerns but finds and found her voice more steady. Organizing in the

face of power is really one of the few ways to not be smothered and suffocated by power's totality and newer uses of untruths.

Discussion

First, we turn to an imagining, a somewhat decolonial (Perez, 1999) inversion of relations from the entire framing of this article which helps illustrate these flows of understandings are elliptical, more than they are unilateral, despite the realities of Kasun's positioning as hailing from the world's barely-still global superpower, the U.S. What might Alfaro-Ponce have learned had she been a guest in a U.S. university? Alfaro-Ponce may likely have been able to learn how privileged faculty ends up dealing with the dissonance and pain of engaging the overtly anti-democratic federal government that was elected in the U.S. in 2016. She would have, perhaps, witnessed the creeping depressions and attempts at activism. We do not know what she would have made of these people's phone calls to their Congressional representatives or their often first attempts at marching politically. We suspect as a woman of color she would have been able to talk with other faculty of color about how they would recognize how the U.S. system has seldom worked well for people of color and that they might have discussed, together, as people of color, how they survive and resist despite these conditions. Among all these scholars, they might have discussed official myths in their countries surrounding ideals such as democracy, human rights, voting, and democratic education.

If Alfaro-Ponce had spent time among more critical scholars, they might have discussed the outrages of the U.S. system which far predate the 2016 U.S. presidential election, such as how the U.S. leads the world in per capita mass incarceration, with a disproportionate rate of incarceration of people of color. She would have perhaps visited neighborhoods with high rates of poverty and seen the ways local governments often do not provide the same public goods and allow private entities to set up businesses that pollute the water they drink and the air they breathe. She would probably discuss about the indigenous groups, situations and the lack of attention and proper recognition from the government. She might have drawn comparisons with how these very things also occur in Mexico, and she might have wondered how different the U.S. really is from Mexico as inequality grows, and as the countries share similarities in colonizing genocides and histories of oppressions of native groups, women, and racisms.

We thus shift toward not just imagined understandings, but the implications of all these taken together. Our comparative lenses are useful to cast into light realities that are otherwise potentially mystified, a common goal of colonization--mystifying the realities we actually live and one potentially leading us toward a darker path of Ong's "bare life." For instance, while it was grossly uncomfortable for Kasun to discuss her bleak projection for the future of DREAMERS, at the same time the discussion was a massive relief. Instead of public forums in the U.S. where Kasun would worry about how to handle members who would talk about "illegals" and other dehumanizing depictions of migrants in the U.S., she instead got to engage in a truth-based understanding of why Mexicans uproot their lives to go to the U.S. as well as the kind of treatment awaiting them. She also knew that she could talk about her president with the critique appropriate to a man who has challenged so many foundational workings of a democracy in ways no other president has.

Over and over, Kasun discussed *how* it was possible a presumably educated populace had elected a reality TV star to become president in her country--a quite reasonable question, and one that consistently anchored her in confronting the lunacy of the current administration in her country with feet firmly planted in reality. So, in

Mexico, Kasun faced not a post-truth reality, but a truth-based reality. We wonder how travel and intercultural connections can continue to be truth-rooting for researchers, young people, and in education as a direct remedy to post-truth times.

We recognize the need to persist in education, even when truth is being contested. Knowledge is definitely power, and education has a fundamental role in distributing and creating knowledge. The persistence of the post-truth scenario will continue, above all with the development of new ways of communication that affects the ways of spread information (Rosenzweig, 2017). Every day, more people will have access to information through the media; however, this information is not necessarily the most accurate, as evidenced by the impact of misinformation's spread in the U.S. 2016 presidential election (Rosenzweig, 2017). In addition to this, the post truth phenomena can be a threat not just in the social and economic economical sphere, also in the political one, where democracy and national security are at risk (Munich Security Report, 2017).

We strongly believe that education is more than an instrument. Education needs to deal with the opportunities and problems, that development of new technologies and ways of communications bring with them. In this context in order to respond to the new order and the logics of the markets we can find that criticality has been avoided or limited within education and substituted by narrow conceptions of standards, and state-mandated instrumental and utilitarian pedagogies. There have been attacks on the professional autonomy of teachers as arbiters of truth. If education is equated almost solely with job training rather than a broader critical citizenship agenda for participatory democracy (Peters, 2017:3).

We maintain a stance of hope in working toward the greater goal of creating democratic community. Within the last few years Mexico lived a historical democratic transition, Mexico itself is a democratic country, but over time has shown the lack of tools to ensure these democratic processes. On July 2018, several university leaders in the state of Hidalgo affiliated to MORENA (a newly created political party in 2014). Their affiliation was enacted in perfect timing and they obtained slots in the local and the federal congress. After the Mexican presidential election in July 2018, the local congress of the state of Hidalgo, for the first time in its entire history, turned in to the opposition party, MORENA.

In addition, in an unprecedented event, the federal congress and the executive power, are going to be represented by the same party, and they were elected with more than 30 million votes. According to the National Electoral Institute in Mexico the coalition of "*Juntos Haremos Historia*," led by MORENA, won 308 places from 500, in the case of the Senate 69 places from 128, in both cases they have the majority. Despite these positive news, which finally allow for a dramatic decrease in authoritarian power of the current party in power in Hidalgo--which has been governing for the last eight decades--the aggressions of the governor against the UAEH continues and the struggles persist. Mexicans finally demonstrated that one person means one vote and the massive participation in political life can change the course of a country and a state.

Our larger senses of purpose remain as intercultural/multicultural educators--educating toward surviving as a planet and thriving in the community. We recognize support, one in the other, as women ready to help in our mutual work and life projects, and as ready to supply lenses from our unique standpoints. For us, this friendship and support in our work makes us allies despite the lie of the modern border that crosses us and creates barriers to our communication and mutual care. Indeed, our friendship is both a small act of resistance and the larger act of love we can all connect in to do decolonial work.

After three presidential campaigns, the new Mexican president finally represents a voice of the people (however conflicted he may be), and we remain cautiously optimistic that he will not just be a voice but a deliverer on promises. We realize the technoethics are increasingly onerous as algorithms choose which news we consume, and yet we also know resistances continue to manifest despite how much we may creep into bare life. We know in our moments of community between the two of us, among other friends, in front of audiences who care and want to know, there are senses of agency and hope, and we find no other option but to embrace it as we feel the cold breath of post-truth so close among us.

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