

# **INTRODUCTION WE(FEM) / YO COLECTIVO: FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES IN THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN**

**The Editorial Collective**

Feminism is insurgent across the Americas and the Caribbean. In the last decade, a tidal wave of love and rage has again given voice to long-stifled cries against femicide, sexual violence, forced reproduction, and economic marginalization. A chorus of feminist collectives and movements has emerged across regions, energizing old and proposing new strategies against racial capitalism, misogyny, ecoterrorist extractivism, and the alibis of heteropatriarchal states. This undercurrent led by feminists and queers within Latin American and Caribbean social movements—a “revolution within the revolution”—challenges the reproduction of racism, heterosexism, and transphobia. The reflexive double-consciousness of feminist, queer, and trans radicals—especially those of African and Indigenous descent—advocates revolutionary struggle while also castigating its shortcomings.

These movements recognize how these interlocking systems of oppression subjugate women in Indigenous and Afro-descended working class communities, among others. This salutary turn has birthed massive mobilizations. They go by different names—Ni Una Menos, el mayo feminista, even #MeToo. A new counter-militancy is blossoming to center the most aggrieved across the Western Hemisphere: direct actions against sexual assaults in Chile and Mexico, feminist assemblies in Argentina, land recuperations and popular education in Brazil, mutual aid centers and radical cultural production in Puerto Rico, and a *marea verde* [green wave] of abortion access victories across Latin America.

These advances from the South are developing a hemispheric rhythm of solidarity with the North. Canada’s Black and Indigenous coalitions, and the United States’ interwoven strands of abolitionism, anti-fascism, reproductive justice campaigns, queer and trans community defense, and labor unionization are fostering an ecosystem that fuses internal critique with social action. Instead of taking for granted a strategy of party-building, electoral campaigns, or negotiations with the state, these movements emphasize directly meeting communities’ social needs—care, food, safety, shelter—beyond and even (at times) against the state.

These Latin American and Caribbean movements build on, queer,

dismantle, and redeploy earlier movements, theories, and everyday struggles, including the suffrage, women's liberation, Third World and Women of Colors, Gay Liberation and LGBTQ+ movements. What distinguishes them from their forebears is the speed and intensity of their networking and the practice of the feminist strike. Both forms of social relation—the network and the strike—lend these recent feminist movements the transversality that Verónica Gago has characterized as a *feminist international*.

Members of the Latin American Philosophy of Education Society (LAPES) sought to contribute to this feminist international by creating a space of encounter and reflection on the practices that can aid these movements. Founded in 2012, LAPES is a collective experiment run by an international group of activists, educators, and scholars. We promote the dissemination of Latin American and Caribbean education philosophies and practices by facilitating South-South and North-South dialogues. Our 2022 *encuentro* aimed to uplift the insurgent pedagogies of feminist movements across the Americas and the Caribbean in order to bring about urgently needed social transformations.

Inspired by these feminist movements and their *sentipensante* (thinking-feeling) modes of being in the world, LAPES gathered activists, educators, scholars, and community organizers to share their work and offer provocations for understanding entangled struggles for decolonization and co-liberation. These included Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso and Ochy Curiel, scholar-activists who organize with GLEFAS, based in the Dominican Republic; Lucí Cavallero, Verónica Gago, and Liz Mason-Deese, scholar-activists who organize with Ni Una Menos in Argentina and abroad; Silvia González, household worker and organizer with Mujeres Sin Frontera and Casa Latina in Seattle; Larissa Gus and Melissa Bonilla, representatives of the Mexican ecofeminist art collective Nahuala Indómita; and Layla Zami, Tito Mitjans Alayón, Violeta Orozco Barrera and Conor Tomás Reed, co-editors of the anthology-in-formation *Black Feminist Studies in the Americas and the Caribbean* with Diarenis Calderón Tartabull and Makeba Lavan.

While the symposium focused broadly on Latin American and

Caribbean feminisms, we sought to draw out the *pedagogías feministas* that emerge from these distinct but connected contexts, as part of nurturing South-North / North-South solidarities. At the same time, the *encuentro* shared feminist pedagogies and practices within and beyond educational institutions and social movement spaces. Among the questions that guided our gathering were: How do feminist movements exercise pedagogical agency? How do *pedagogías feministas* stimulate feminist modes of disobedience in and outside educational institutions? How do *pedagogías feministas* differ, or build upon and advance, other forms of critical pedagogy? What lessons do feminist activists and scholars offer about challenging state power, racial capitalism, neoliberal ideology and practice? How do recent Latin American and Caribbean feminisms complement and differ from U.S. Women of Colors and other strains of feminism within and beyond the region? How do *pedagogías feministas* respond to local and global manifestations of environmental system collapse? What new worlds do we envision through feminist pedagogies?

We harnessed the power of online collaboration and organizing during the COVID-19 pandemic to create a temporary educational platform for the feminist international. Our fully bilingual, hybrid conference blended in-person and online environments. For two days, over 500 people attended from across the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe while speakers joined in from the University of Washington, North Carolina, Illinois, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, Guatemala, and Germany. The complementarity of these two spaces was particularly clear to one LAPES member from their location in Buenos Aires, because the first day of the symposium coincided with a massive feminist rally in the city—Lucí Cavallero and Verónica Gago spoke to us from a crowded café just steps from the mobilization. LAPES 2022 was free and open to the public just as this issue of *LÁPIZ* is open access, for as a collective we affirm that knowledge is no one's property. For the same reason, membership in LAPES cannot be bought—it is given freely.

We see in Latin American and Caribbean feminist movements a

welcome challenge to the domination of feminized and racialized bodies, one that places educational practices at the center of political struggle. Heightened precarity due to the COVID-19 pandemic has only underscored the importance of furthering these movements and their feminist philosophies of the commons. Anti-colonial, feminist, queer, and trans routes to liberation promise no overarching panacea. However, their perspectives and methods offer a framework for mass struggle that refuses to consign anyone to being the bridge upon which another's freedom is charted. By fostering dialogue among heterogeneous Latin American and Caribbean thinkers, artists, activists, and education practitioners in the United States, LAPES collaborates with nascent feminist, antiracist, and decolonial pedagogies in the North. We hope to spark generative dis/orientations of our current pedagogical models in order to midwife new, more egalitarian worlds.

## **ELOISA AGUIRRE AND CRISTINA SÁNCHEZ-MARTÍN ON NAHUALA INDÓMITA**

It wasn't by chance that we met at the LAPES 2022 Symposium on "PEDAGOGÍAS FEMINISTAS: Movements, Solidarity, and Disobedience for New Worlds." This took place at the University of Washington, Seattle, at the end of Cristina's first year as a new assistant professor in the UW English department and Eloisa's beginning of their journey into graduate school. In a sense, our previous work had led us to meet there, a space where we could convene with other folks committed to feminist and liberatory pedagogy.

Soon after, we both took on the task of reviewing and then translating "Manifiesto on Feminist Pedagogies," one of the papers that was presented at the symposium by the Mexican feminist group Nahuala Indómita. Much of the antiracist and feminist work we had been shaped by—since the uprisings after George Floyd's murder, for example—required that academics / scholars practice what they preach, and thus, bring about actual change in their academic worlds.

With this in mind, we approached the translation of an article about feminism as such: as feminist collaborative and horizontal practice. What does it mean when both authors are speakers of different (more or less privileged) Spanishes and occupy different positions in the predominantly white-centric anglophone US academic world? Translating involved reflecting on our embodied, individual, and collective experiences within and across the language boundaries of two colonial languages: English and Spanish. It meant unlearning and transgressing the prescriptivist language ideologies that assume gender binaries and “neat” monolingual expressions.

The example “we(fem)” illustrates it best. As we aimed to keep the inclusive (non-binary) language the authors had chosen to implement in Spanish and at the same time committed to preserve the femininity behind the author’s writings, we realized that “*nosotras*” in this manifesto meant more than “we.” *Nosotras* made reference to the meaning of “*compañera*” and the author’s struggles as femme writers. Refusing to translate the pronoun *nosotras* to a simple “we” allowed us to take on the role of translators as a tool for liberation.

### **MIGUEL ÁNGEL BLANCO MARTÍNEZ ON OCHY CURIEL AND YUDERKYS ESPINOSA MIÑOSO**

LAPES 2022 understood from its germination the transversal desire to critique modern / colonial paradigms of both “feminism” and “pedagogy.” When it comes to “feminism,” we sought to challenge “gender” and “the woman subject” as the only axis of difference and as a homogeneous political subject. In regards to “pedagogy,” we sought to contest academic disciplines and practices lacking an interlocking analysis of race and social class within the Eurocentric narrative of progress and civilization that is characteristic of formal education.

Having joined LAPES around the drafting of the LAPES 2022 Symposium, when asked about potential collaborators, I could not help but to suggest Ochy Curiel and Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso as essential participants in any conversation about feminist pedagogies.

As a queer feminist myself coming from the Spanish State—or the first ‘modern Nation-State,’ as Enrique Dussel would put it, given its unacknowledged imperial foundation and current colonial implications—Ochy’s and Yuderkys’ intellectual and militant work, jointly and/or separately, has had a tremendous impact across Spanish and Southern European feminisms, in addition to Latin America and the Caribbean.

Thanks to Latin American feminists and friends in European feminist circuits, I had the chance of becoming familiar with their work and felt that LAPES would undoubtedly become a friendly-as-political space to share references on feminist pedagogical discussions that are neglected or outright invisibilized by Global North / Global South (academic) imperialism. Such is the case of the United States, where Ochy’s and Yuderkys’ work, among many other feminist thinkers from Latin America and the Caribbean, are largely absent from the curricula of women’s and gender studies, sociology, or philosophy, or marginally present in departments with a focus on Latin America, the Caribbean, or the Iberian Peninsula. Aside from English-Spanish translation, inequalities at a publishing level underline an asymmetry of power/knowledge circulation indebted to the coloniality of power and knowledge, as Aníbal Quijano would frame it, that is simultaneously traversed by the coloniality of gender, as María Lugones described. Given the dominance of individualism and corporate academia in the United States, communal critical spaces for tackling such asymmetries are rare. Amidst this conflictual landscape, LAPES 2022 attempted to become such a space thanks in part to the interventions by Ochy and Yuderkys.

In this light, Ochy and Yuderkys’ presentations provided LAPES 2022 with a feminist decolonial genealogy, theory, and practice to understand feminist pedagogies as making room for the coexistence of new worlds. It is inspiring to undertake decolonial feminism as “*campo de conflicto y tensión*,” as Yuderkys suggested in her talk, to keep interrogating in feminist pedagogies the limits and / as possibilities in the imbrication of education and world-making.

Departing from this premise, Ochy Curiel enlightened us with a

critical genealogy of decolonial feminist pedagogies, ranging from the militant and popular education-based pedagogies of Paulo Freire and Catherine Walsh to the memory and communal knowledges of villages and indigenous communities in Abya Yala. By merging the emancipatory promises of popular education philosophies with the knowledge traditions particular to each village or community, Curiel invites us to conceive feminist decolonial pedagogies as attentive to orality, embodiment, and ontological relationalities. Reversing the extractive knowledge-logics of academic practitioners who question ‘the other’ as an object rather than a subject of research, Ochy highlights a “*cimarronaje*” style of intellectual engagement, thus surpassing the methods of formal education. To better grasp this *cimarronaje*, Ochy presented us the GLEFAS-led *Escuelas Feministas Descoloniales Cimarronas* held from 2016 where a *cimarrona* (maroon) feminist decolonial pedagogy is enhanced with participants from the Dominican Republic and Haiti, becoming a remarkable experience to nurture decolonial feminist activism in the region.

Continuing with such a *cimarrona* positionality, Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso deepened into the critical and militant genealogy of decolonial feminisms in Latin America and the Caribbean by tracing its history from personal and collective standpoints. In this light, Yuderkys introduced us to her activist journey, ranging from a politicized upbringing and a university militancy to participation in Argentinian feminisms before her return to the Dominican Republic. In addition to the legacy and inspiration received by black feminisms and autonomous feminisms in Latin America, these personal and collective experiences have nurtured Yuderkys’ contributions to decolonial feminisms. As a pioneer in the field, and in the company of many accomplice thinkers and activists, Yuderkys’ work has helped to problematize the Eurocentric neglect of gender, race, and social class by expanding the critical tools provided by “modernity/coloniality” scholars. Among other pedagogical principles, Yuderkys stresses the importance of a “*genealogía de la experiencia* (genealogy of experience)” that is able to implement, as decolonial feminist pedagogical methodologies, the historization,

systematization, and unlearning of communal knowledges; in sum, to practice “*un Yo colectivo* (a collective I)” that is at the heart of pedagogical exchanges and discussions amidst a culture of hatred and cancellation.

Enjoying Ochy’s participation online via Zoom from her office at Universidad de Bogotá, and Yuderkys’ in-person participation at the University of Washington, the experience of moderating both discussions represented an enormous un / learning in online and in-person collectivity. The large number of online participants connecting from around the world with a significant number from territories in Abya Yala, as well as the physical presence of the educational and militant participants reunited in this volume, made their contributions not only intellectually and politically relevant, but also a generative bridging for every participation at LAPES 2022. The small public who gathered at the University of Washington despite LAPES’s efforts to promote the event compared to the large online attendance played a role in moderating their talks, as well as in my afterthoughts.

These circle back to the coloniality of gender, power, and knowledge, and the corporatization of academia in the US when trying to provoke its political nature. A similar event at an educational forum in Latin America, the Caribbean, or Spain would have greatly surpassed the symposium’s in-person attendance. These contradictions speak for themselves. I would like to end by noting the feminist pedagogical significance of their contributions at LAPES 2022, and now, with their publication in Spanish, Portuguese, and English so that English-speaking educational spaces may also benefit from such important intellectual and militant pedagogies.

### **COLETTE JUNG ON THE *BLACK FEMINIST STUDIES IN THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN ANTHOLOGY***

Presentations at LAPES 2022 offered direct challenges to the oppression of variously feminized, racialized folks while situating education beyond the academy at the core of socio-political struggle.

Thinking through struggles of Afro-descended feminisms in developing a collective feminist pedagogy of liberation, Layla Zami, A. Tito Mitjans Alayón, Violeta Orozco Barrera, and Conor Tomás Reed present their timely co-editorial work. This anthology-in-formation strengthens solidarities among Black and Indigenous feminist activists, radicals, and scholars, and highlights political, social, and generational knowledge that is not often represented by mainstream institutional publications.

As with many nation-state institutions, the academy—historically, a tool of linguistic, epistemic, and cultural erasure—typically legitimizes knowledge aligned with locations of privilege in the system of coloniality. *Black Feminist Studies in the Americas and the Caribbean* offers readers interpretations and epistemologies that are not part of the circulated knowledge systems of nation-states. It counters political structures that value Black and Indigenous feminisms of the United States and the global North over those from the global South. Taking inspiration from the current circulated works of Black feminism, the co-editors present a fine emerging collection that, as Conor Tomás Reed said, “aims to translate and circulate non-Anglophone Black feminist voices that are silenced by the market flows of publishing that operate within the grooves of colonialism laid long ago.”

Included is a myriad of epistemic productions across a variety of disciplines and art forms. Recognizing the academy is the near exclusive world of cisgender heterosexual *mestizo* white elites, its carefully selected materials move the conversation of many radical feminisms beyond the question of universalization of ‘woman’ tied up with modern and contemporary binary understandings of gender circulated in the coloniality of power. In doing so, it offers space for more horizontal connections with Black women, cis, trans, and non-binary folk across the Americas and Caribbean.

In the global system of coloniality—circulators of knowledge often universalize Black and Indigenous experiences as heteronormative ones of the global North. The successes of Black and women of color feminisms from the North, including USA and Canada, often result in

Black and women of color, trans and non-binary, and feminists from the global South being left out of conversation—missing from the table. The dominance of Black and Indigenous feminists from the Anglophone world, the co-editors suggest, over-values mainstream English. This is, as A. Tito Mitjans Alayón said, “a deterritorialization strategy to erase regional Black feminist production and thus maintain white and heteronormative hegemony in academic and intellectual spaces.” Other forms and languages of knowledge have minimal resources to publish and circulate their academic and literary work.

With this as a starting point, the forthcoming anthology speaks to the ways in which women, feminists, queer, transgender, intersexed, and non-binary folks racialized in the colonial, modern gender system—even whilst practicing decoloniality and anti-racism—might also produce what Yuderlys calls a “*campo de conflicto y tensión*” or enact what María Lugones calls “horizontal hostilities/*hostilidades horizontals*.” As our multiple relations are a dialectic of oppressed / oppressing phenomena, not having access to one another, and perceptions built from within familiar knowledge systems, are a hindrance to community building. Rather than assimilating each other into familiar structures of understanding and perception, this work archives and brings together in one book multiple voices that wouldn’t otherwise be encountered. To engage, as Violeta Orozco Barrera said, “a radical praxis of knowledge production we must closely read, critically analyze, and intentionally cite Black women who are writing outside of the United States and in multiple languages.” *Black Feminist Studies in the Americas and the Caribbean* speaks to a comparative, interdisciplinary, and transnational approach. It invites readers to encounter difference with an emphasis on interconnections as beings under the feet of, and otherwise than, the coloniality of being; to come to know not from familiar categories and dominant epistemologies, but from new connections in the learning/unlearning of one another.

A major force of the anthology lies in its method—transgressing and provoking oppressive limitations by bringing together four

languages that, while colonial, taken together become an act of radical and decolonial pedagogy. When our differences are accessible to each other, we encounter multiplicity of thoughts, ideas, and cosmologies, as well as practices of resistance to the violence of racism, misogyny, and transmisogyny in the coloniality of power—even where they are enacted from within solidarity projects. The anthology therefore centers Black women, queer, and trans folk in Latin America and the Caribbean and offers space for new encounters to benefit all readers—not only in English, but Spanish, Kreyol / French, and Portuguese.

Lastly, I was excited to listen to the co-editors discuss how *Black Feminist Studies in the Americas and the Caribbean* engages the work of Black feminist translation studies as crucial and complex engagements. Understanding gendered, racial politics in the lived experiences of people by comparing and recovering cultural histories, and taking interpretations themselves as translation, the anthology is an epistemic and linguistic “transculturation” (a term described by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz). This engages gendered, racial identity from multiple colonial contexts and intersectional interpretations across generations—between friends and mentors—beyond the official limits of language and linguistics. As part of a collection of presentations at LAPES 2022 over a variety of technologies and lingualities, this is, to echo Layla Zami, “twenty-first-century feminism.”

### **CONOR TOMÁS REED ON LUCÍ CAVALLERO AND VERÓNICA GAGO, AND SILVIA GONZÁLEZ**

When our compas invoke the power of the *feminist international*, catapulting lessons around the hemisphere, we can develop a shared timing and lexicon of feminist pedagogies in action. The contribution by Lucí Cavallero and Verónica Gago in Buenos Aires, Argentina, alongside that of Silvia González in Seattle, Washington, suggests that the circuits of debt abolition and dignified household work are being hotwired into a new force that could recompose anti-capitalist

labor power more broadly.

Lucí and Vero report from within the campaign of Ni Una Menos and friends that demands, “We want to stay alive, free, and debt free!” Analyzing the aphoristic power of slogans on the streets (“debt is a time bomb”), they forge clear everyday connections with debt in order to de-abstract it, to go “from finance to bodies.” This *counter-pedagogy* maps out debt’s pervasiveness, while pointing out methods and locations to interrupt it, such as actions outside the Argentina Central Bank and Black Rock investment group. Interrupting the relationship between debt, threats to bodily autonomy, and sexist violence, they reflect closely on the feminist manifestos that are written to be shared at these mass protests. These vivid examples enjoin us to study our crowd-circulated compositions as rigorously as other forms of political writing.

Lucí and Vero also discuss how they created transversal links for all unions to lift up these feminist anti-debt campaigns and slogans in a larger cohesive ecosystem, which ensures that the state and capital can’t easily divide “feminist militancy” from “union power” and vice versa. The feminist international interweaves our sites of mobilization—Argentina, Puerto Rico, Spain, Chile—and, for example, highlights how compas in Puerto Rico have synthesized debt abolition with anti-colonial struggles. Flipping the responsibility of debt—refusing to beg for debt “forgiveness,” instead demanding that “debt is owed to us” for millennia of unpaid and underpaid feminized labors—these movements offer an array of hard-earned strategies that could be activated by *LÁPIZ* readers everywhere. One new question emerges in the present: how will our compas navigate the recent change in state power from Macri to Milei?

Almost seven thousand miles away in Seattle’s Casa Latina, Silvia González describes gains in the transnational feminist movement at the site of the home. In a similar *counter-pedagogy* that alters our terminology from “domestic workers” to “household workers,” Silvia refuses the domestication and domination implicit in these forms and sites of labor. She recounts the long sexist, colonial, and enslavement origins of household work, as well as the ways that 20th century

struggles of migrant feminist laborers ushered in the 2007 creation of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, forged by over a dozen different US organizations. Affirming this grassroots power in conjunction with representative politics, Silvia recognizes her values in politicians like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Pramila Jayapal, while also honoring the power of her own matrilineal lineage across generations.

Adapting her analysis in real-time to address the recent mobilizations and crisis rhythms of #MeToo, the Women’s March, and the COVID pandemic, Silvia also foregrounds the Global South dimensions of this movement that draws from feminist legacies in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Even so, she measures how deeply the United States must be restructured to dignify this labor. Only ten states and two cities have a bill of rights for household workers. In addition, a gendered contradiction must also be overcome within their ranks: men who do gardening and landscaping labor often don’t want to be classified as “household workers,” so they’re not yet protected by these bills. Silvia’s energetic clarity shows how homes, workers’ centers, and cities are an overlapping base of operations from which people can transform the conditions of our lives.

## **CONTINUATIONS**

In strategic kinship from Bogota to Mexico City, Berlin to Havana, Brooklyn to San Juan, Buenos Aires to Seattle, and beyond, these *LÁPIZ N°8* contributors sing of *potencia*, not *poder*—“power with, not power over”—to anchor us in feminist ideas and actions as we navigate overlapping crises that have altered the already turbulent world since our summer 2022 symposium. In a testament to their lasting lucidity, these pieces remain a reference point to navigate a new series of entwined upheavals. The coalitional spirit of these compas’ pedagogical lessons—their *We (fem)* and *Yo colectivo* protagonism—is as much about our beloved communities as our locations of study and movement. The intricate archipelago of

schools and social centers, workplaces and homes, soil and streets are all indispensable to the practice of militant feminist pedagogies.

As this issue goes to press, a genocidal war in Gaza is polarizing a generation and recomposing the world. After October 7, 2023, the Israeli state, with unwavering US government support, began raining bombs upon homes, hospitals, schools, shelters, food access sites, and escape routes everywhere in Gaza. State-sanctioned vengeance has spread across the West Bank and elsewhere in the region. The growing global movement against Israeli settler-colonial apartheid and its most recent military aggression includes demands that go far beyond a ceasefire. They include an end to the siege of Gaza, the release of all Palestinian prisoners, an end to the Israeli/US occupation of Palestine, and an end to Western complicity in Zionism. As we lift up revolutionary feminist struggles in the Americas and the Caribbean, may we also study and co-conspire with Palestinian feminists like Rabab Abdulhadi, Nada Elia, Noura Erakat, Nadine Naber, and the Palestinian Feminist Collective.<sup>1</sup>

We invite *LÁPIZ* readers to conspire and act purposefully, with both patience and urgency, in these pivotal times. Our next symposium and journal issue theme are yet unwritten. We invite readers to contact us with proposals for collaboration at LAPESwebsite@gmail.com. Onwards with heart and focus, compas!■

1→ See, for examples: Rabab Abdulhadi, "Israeli settler colonialism in context: Celebrating (Palestinian) death and normalizing gender and sexual violence." *Feminist Studies* 45, no. 2 (2019): 541-573. Nada Elia, *Greater than the Sum of Our Parts: Feminism, Inter/Nationalism, and Palestine* (London: Pluto Press, 2023). Noura Erakat, *Justice for Some: Law and the Question of Palestine* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2019). Nadine Naber, "When Abolitionists Say 'Free Them All,' We Mean Palestine Too," *Truthout*, December 29, 2023, <https://truthout.org/articles/when-abolitionists-say-free-them-all-we-mean-palestine-too/>. Palestinian Feminist Collective, *All Out for Palestine: Palestine Digital Action Toolkit* (October 2023), <https://bit.ly/PFCToolkit/>.

