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Cover Art Reflection: A Collaboration between Scholars and Borderlands Artists

Dulcinea Lara, New Mexico State University
Manal Hamzeh, New Mexico State University

Angela Valenzuela and Angela Davis' concept of "struggle on struggle" invites us to consider contemporary liberation struggles as scaffolded by previous struggles from another moment in time. The call to action of "struggle on struggle" also invites us to struggle together in solidarity against destructive forces. It is a call to un-erase the historical struggles in one context and bridge them with the recognizable struggles of the moment. It is a call to imagine our co-living now and in futurities of loving, harmony, and abundance on this earth with all beings.

In the Borderlands of southern New Mexico, west Texas, and north Chihuahua, Mexico, our university sits in/on the state and nation, prompting the urgent need to build solidarity. Colonization has shaped this region vis-a-vis militarism, religion, schooling, and state authority. The settler colonial power over our lands and peoples has been maintained through erasures of people's knowledges, ways of being, and histories, as well as people's disobedience, refusal, and resistance to western colonial hegemony.

New Mexican youth do not have many opportunities to learn about individual or collective resistance to empire, by design. Of course, some teachers offer these histories as curriculum, but they are not part of the official text.

In this moment of genocide, climate catastrophe, and autocracy, marking the emergence of Ethnic Studies in our university, we are trying multiple approaches to knowledge co-creation, dissemination, and understanding impact. We are working with play scripts, museum exhibitions, interactive games, mobile education pods, and a mural series on our campus that uplift local artists who might not otherwise be given wallspace by the formal routes and coded ways of naming "expert" knowledge creators.

Our latest mural, *Homecoming/Bienvenida*, featured on the cover of this issue, is the latest Borderlands and Ethnic Studies (BEST) "Borderlands Mural Project" series. It is housed in the lobby of our academic home, the College of Health, Education, and Social Transformation at New Mexico State University (NMSU). Overhanging the first floor above the lobby, the four murals are historical interpretations of Indigenous longevity dating back 20,000 years, as well as three moments of revolution, resistance, and refusal in the 17th, 19th, and 20th centuries. The fifth wall is home to a "fantastical" mural inviting viewers to see themselves in the "now moment" with peoples, animals, plants, and the land—in storytelling, amazement, dancing (breaking to quebradita), sharing

medicine, growing and eating good food, juggling, skateboarding, holding hands, and reflecting their wellbeing, knowledges, and imaginations for social transformation rooted in solidarity.

The *Homecoming/ Bienvenida* mural is rooted in ancestral knowledges about three resistance movements that happened near NMSU: the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the Mexican Defection of 1848, and the Black Migration West of the early 1900s. It celebrates these lands as the crux of civilization in the western hemisphere, resulting from the uncovering of footprints in what is now called White Sands.

Homecoming/ Bienvenida celebrates the sacredness and people power in this region while inviting guests to imagine thriving futurities. The four upper-level murals unearth the stories of people's dignity and refusals, mostly left out of New Mexico's K-College curriculum. They inspired the visuals in the fifth mural, embodying the pluralities of Borderlands Peoples in the present, and simultaneously, imagining futurities of love, abundance, wisdom, transborder solidarities, and compassion.

The four colors undergirding the upper-level murals represent the Indigenous Medicine Wheel and the Four Sacred Directions: White/North, Red/East, Yellow/South, and Black/West. Intentional prayers are associated with these directions and colors.

Three of the BEST team and eight local artists, including two NMSU art students, collaborated to create vibrant murals that engage all who enter the building.

Ancestral Footprints
17" x 4"

The north upper-level mural, painted mostly in white hues, represents what is now called "White Sands," the sky, and the ancestral footprints.

This mural visualizes life dating back many thousands of years, when the landscape in the Tularosa Basin did not have the gypsum sand dunes but an abundance of water, foliage, and grasslands that

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supported Ice Age animals like mammoths, dire wolves, and human life—in the harmony and balance depicted in the mural.

Pueblo Revolt of 1680
35" x 4"

The east upper-level mural reflects the Sun's origin and the Earth's rotation in red hues. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 is the first of only two successful overthrows of colonizers in the Western Hemisphere.

This mural spans Shiprock, New Mexico, to Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. It was a lengthy journey undertaken by Pueblo peoples to remove Spanish colonizers from their lands successfully.

Black Migration West, early 1900s
35" x 4"

The west upper-level mural shows transformation, mystery, and shadows in blue and black hues.

This mural honors the Great Migration West, when many African Americans escaped violence and Jim Crow laws in the South, resulting in many families settling in New Mexico. One such family was that of homesteader Francis Marion Boyer, who was instrumental in founding the state's all-Black town, Blackdom.

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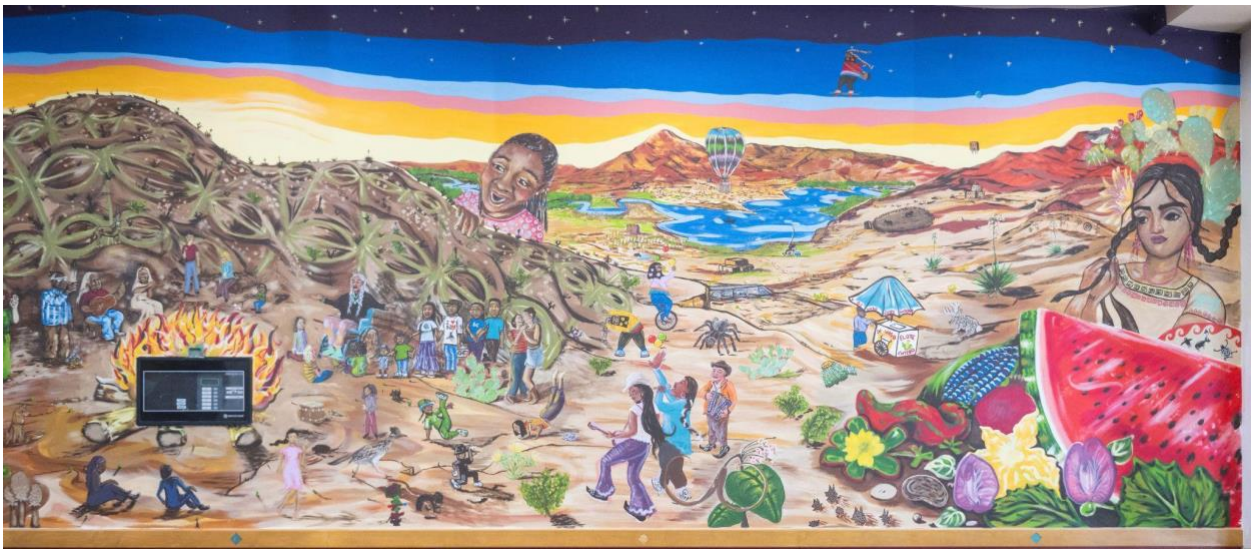
Mexican Defection of 1848
17" x 4"

The south upper-level mural represents abundance and growth in yellow and brings to life the Mexican Defection of 1848.

At the conclusion of the United States' war against Mexico, the U.S. took a huge portion of Mexican territory. Many Mexican nationals who did not want to become U.S. citizens defected back to Mexican territory—a North-to-South migration.

Homecoming
29" x 8"



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The lower-level mural is a continuation of the four upper murals. Reflections of origin and landing places with historical elements are included throughout.

The mural includes magical realism and playful elements, such as Tortugas Mountain as a turtle shell, larger-than-life girls pointing to the four directional murals, and communities “conviviendo” like students at Homecoming. The mural is about joy, resistance, and solidarity across borders. People, animals, plants, and landscapes, both surreal and real, gather in a sacred space. Elements of the past, present, and future merge to show people celebrating, and building toward something new.