



## OPEN WORDS: ACCESS AND ENGLISH STUDIES

Vol. 12, No. 1 (December 2019): 8–41

DOI: 10.37514/OPW-J.2019.12.1.02

ISSN: 2690-3911 (Print) 2690-392X (Online)

<https://wac.colostate.edu/openwords/>

### **Doing Democracy: The Salt of the Earth Recovery Project – Citizen Scholars and Activist Writing Across Communities**

Michelle Hall Kells, Ph.D.  
University of New Mexico

#### **ABSTRACT**

This article triangulates the story of the women the Ladies Auxiliary 209 of the Local 890 chapter of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers during the historic 1950s Empire Zinc Mine strike in Bayard, New Mexico with an examination of Writing Across Communities (WACommunities) as an efficacious approach to enhancing meaningful access to literacy practice through the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project. WACommunities principles and practices are applied to promote literacy, civic engagement, and open access to knowledge-making and political participation, and the article chronicles the process of researching, conceptualizing, and implementing the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project with a team of graduate students during the summer of 2018. The implications of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project are discussed for teaching public writing and community literacy in open admission institutions. Reflections on the project show the work involved in mentoring new leaders in a generative and restorative space of community activism and writing and the implications of those actions for literacy education for a “threatened generation.” The construction of community writing workshops through the development of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project help to engage local community members, activists, and citizen scholars in a deliberative process toward a collective vision for promoting the recovery, preservation, and restoration of the community’s historic memory and rhetorical imagination.

The resonances of Cold War-era public rhetoric currently circulating in U.S. civic discourse challenge us as writing teachers and literacy educators working with historically under-served and under-represented student populations to respond and make visible institutionalized systems of oppression. The recovery of historical

---

*Open Words: Access and English Studies* is an open-access, peer-review scholarly journal, published on the WAC Clearinghouse and supported by Colorado State University. Articles are published under a Creative Commons BY-NC-ND license (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs).

ISSN: 2690-3911 (Print) 2690-392X (Online).

narratives that insidiously inform and reproduce the violence of exclusion increasingly promulgated throughout the public sphere—in our classrooms, courtrooms, press conferences, senate hearings, and presidential addresses—can help to expose and resist the volatile current of “whitelash” inflecting national and global cultural rhetorical ecologies today.<sup>1</sup> Engaging the geo-political disturbance ecologies in this post-colonial, post-industrial historical moment is central to the mission of literacy education in open access institutions.



Figure 1: Salt of the Earth Recovery Project Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshop in Silver City Museum, Silver City, New Mexico July 28, 2019.  
Photo by Michelle Hall Kells and available online  
(<https://saltoftheearthrecoveryproject.wordpress.com/>).

As we have emptied out our classrooms and sheltered in place with the global COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed the tragic impact of this public

---

<sup>1</sup> For further examination of political “whitelash” through Mexican American civil rights history and in U.S. post-Obama cultural rhetorical ecologies, see: Michelle Hall Kells, *Vicente Ximenes, LBJ's Great Society, and Mexican American Civil Rights Rhetoric* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2018).

Kells

health crisis on our most vulnerable communities. In her *New York Times* op-ed, University of New Mexico graduate student, Sunnie Rae Clahchischiligi writes, “The coronavirus virus outbreak in the Navajo Nation is showing that nowhere is as remote as it might have once seemed. And the reservation is not prepared. My nation is held together by a culture of togetherness — but that tradition of gathering also makes the spread of the virus worse.” Within and beyond our borders, we are looking for language that promotes healing, wholeness, and hope. We are looking for language to teach in a world that is more divided, more polarized, more threatening, and more unjust. The environmental and public health impacts of a world out of balance have been visible in the social and political violence well before the COVID-19 crisis, however.

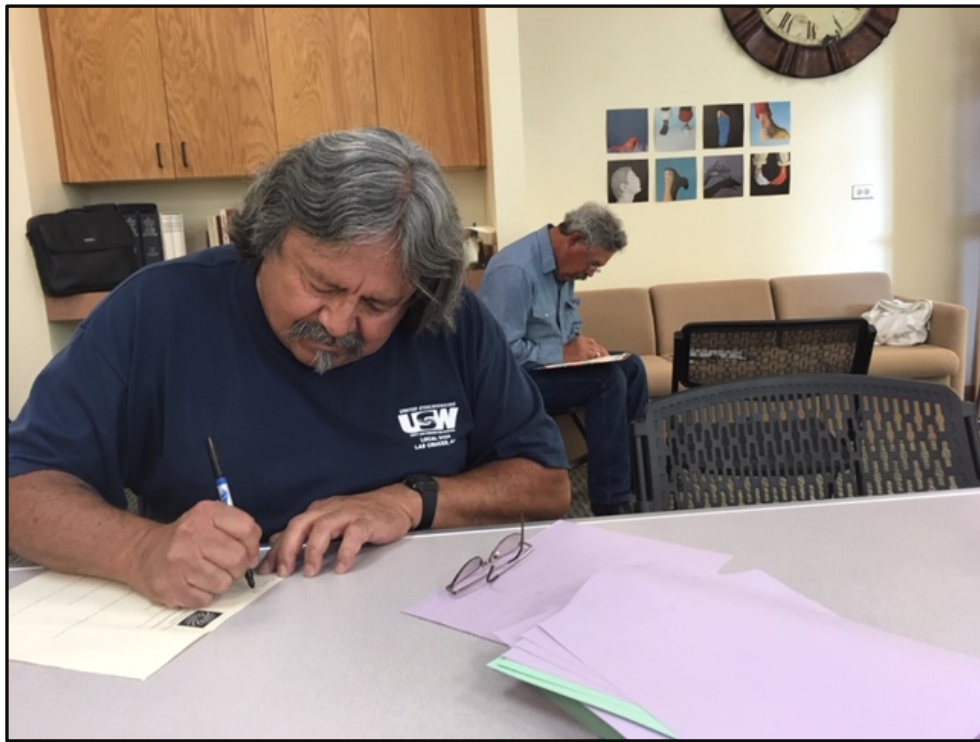


Figure 2: The Salt of the Earth Recovery Project Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshop at Bayard Public Library, Bayard, New Mexico, July 27, 2019.

Photo by Michelle Hall Kells available online

(<https://saltoftheearthrecoveryproject.wordpress.com/>).

The human rights crises evidenced by thousands of environmental, economic, and political refugees pressing the limits of the U.S. imaginary over the past five years dramatically attests to unsustainable market economies and political tyrannies impacting local and global vulnerable communities. The paramilitary show-down against women and children seeking refuge in a growing caravan of the “haves and have-nots” of Latin America continues to play out at the geopolitical borders of our nation. As scholars and teachers living and working in what we might best term as a white nationalist proto-fascist political climate, I argue that educators have a moral responsibility and civic duty to respond by enhancing social access to literacy practice, engaging democratizing discourses, and opening spaces for public deliberation and dissent.

### **Open Access: Literacy as a Civil Right and Civic Responsibility**

This article triangulates the story of the women of the Ladies Auxiliary 209 of the Local 890 chapter of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers during the historic 1950s Empire Zinc Mine strike in Bayard, New Mexico with an examination of Writing Across Communities (WACommunities) as an efficacious approach to enhancing meaningful access to literacy practice through the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project. First, I illustrate how the application of WACommunities principles and practices promotes literacy, civic engagement, and open access to knowledge-making and political participation. Second, I chronicle the process of researching, conceptualizing, and implementing the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project with a team of graduate students in the summer of 2018. Third, I discuss the implications of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project for teaching public writing and community literacy in open admission institutions. Finally, I extend this story to include reflections on the work of mentoring new leaders in the generative and restorative space of community activism and writing and the implications for literacy education for a “threatened generation.”<sup>2</sup>

This article illustrates how the formation of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project offers a rich allegory for the challenges of community-based writing projects. The construction of community writing workshops through the development of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project in southern New Mexico (situated at the border nexus of Texas, Arizona, and Mexico) ultimately helped to engage local community

---

<sup>2</sup> For explication of the notion of a “threatened generation, see: Derek Owens, *Composition and Sustainability: Teaching for a Threatened Generation* (Urbana: NCTE, 2001).

members, activists, and citizen scholars in a deliberative process toward a collective vision for promoting the recovery, preservation, and restoration of the community's historic memory and rhetorical imagination.<sup>3</sup> The use of community writing to protect the collective memory and local archive of material cultural represents a powerful approach to enhancing community connections and political access. Deliberative practice as the act of giving witness to citizens' own civic experiences within their various spheres of belonging is democratic engagement in its most essential form.

Additionally, the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project offers a case study in the implementation of WACommunities principles and practices beyond the classroom. The governing principles of WACommunities provided the conceptual underpinnings for framing the mission and vision of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project. In turn, the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project provides a proof of concept illustrating the veracity and generativity of WACommunities principles and practices outside the academy where citizen scholars and activists seek to constitute local knowledge and exercise civic agency.

### **Writing Across Communities: Citizen Scholars in and beyond the Classroom**

WACommunities began in 2004 at UNM as an alternative approach to traditional WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) models of cross-disciplinary and cross-community literacy education. Juan Guerra chronicles the turbulent evolution of WACommunities resisting what I have termed "vanilla flavored WAC" at UNM in *Language, Culture, Identity, and Citizenship in College Classrooms and Communities*.<sup>4</sup> WACommunities was initially conceptualized and institutionalized in response to the complex cultural rhetorical ecology and ethnolinguistic landscape at the University of New Mexico, a designated Research 1 Hispanic-serving institution. WACommunities represents the first, if not only, approach to cross-curricular and cross-institutional literacy education that asserts that literacy education is both a civil right and civic responsibility.<sup>5</sup> As the primary conduit for the distribution of social goods such as food, shelter, work, health care, medical care, among others, WACommunities asserts

---

<sup>3</sup> A version of this article was presented for the *La Canoa* Lecture at the National Hispanic Cultural Center with our team of graduate students on October 20, 2018 <<http://www.nhccnm.org/event/la-canoa-women-local-890-empire-mine-strike/>>

<sup>4</sup> Juan C. Guerra, *Language, Culture, Identity, and Citizenship in College Classrooms and Communities* (Urbana, IL: NCTE-Routledge, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> See: Michelle Hall Kells, "Writing Across Communities: Cultural Rhetorical Ecologies and Transcultural Citizenship." John Lioy, ed. *The International Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* (Malden: Wiley Press, Winter 2017/Spring 2018).



that literacy represents a basic civil right (and basic necessity) for survival in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Building on the fifty-year institutionalized history of Writing Across the Curriculum, WACommunities reconceptualized the governing principles of cross-disciplinary literacy education to foreground the needs of vulnerable communities in and beyond the college classroom. In brief, traditional WAC historically privileges SAEE (Standard American Edited English), focuses on teachers as the principal agent of literacy practice, and largely engages academic discourse and genres across the disciplines (or curriculum) as the primary scope of literacy education. WACommunities, in contrast, privileges the ethnolinguistic diversity of writers as agents of complex literacy practices across academic, professional, civic, and cultural spheres of belonging.

WACommunities, as an intellectual commonwealth, promotes a set of principles and practices that have since been incorporated into WAC programs by other institutions nationally. With my colleague Juan Guerra (University of Washington), I have been conducting workshops, presenting conference papers, and offering invited speaker presentations for the past fifteen years, working toward the broad circulation of a WACommunities framework to assist other institutions in developing and innovating their own site-specific, culturally responsive models of literacy education.<sup>6</sup> There is not a one-size-fits-all model for every institution. In these ways, WACommunities represents a resistance discourse not only to traditional WAC, but the corporatization of the university, the commodification of Big Comp, and the homogenizing discourses of Writing Program Administration programs that unequally benefit traditional, white, privileged, and Standard English-speaking student populations.

WACommunities, in contrast, argues that writing programs should reflect the cultural rhetorical ecologies of the diverse communities they serve.<sup>7</sup> Most recently, WACommunities has been adopted by St. John's University under the leadership of

---

<sup>6</sup> For additional perspectives on WACommunities principles and practices, see: Juan C. Guerra. *Language, Culture, Identity, and Citizenship in College Classrooms and Communities*. Urbana: NCTE-Routledge, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> For an open-source user guide for adopting a Writing Across Communities approach to literacy education, see: Writing Across Communities Resources. Online. 2015 Community Writing Conference "Citizen Scholars and the Cultural Rhetorical Ecologies of Writing Across Communities" Workshop Working Papers. <<https://sites.google.com/site/resourcewac/>>

Kells

Anne Ellen Geller in support of its social justice mission of serving first-generation college student populations.<sup>8</sup>

First the WACommunities approach regards language and literacy as human processes integral to building and maintaining human communities (cultural rhetorical ecologies). Second, it recognizes language diversity as a reflection of rich cultural connections locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. Third, it adopts the notion that the acquisition of academic literacy (and of standard edited American English) should enhance students' communicative resources, not erase them. Finally, it advocates culturally responsive approaches to literacy education across and beyond the curriculum.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, WACommunities applies language learning and literacy education principles for diverse student populations toward the enactment of an organic (process-centered), synergistic (cross-institutional and cross-disciplinary), holistic (integrated), sustainable (flexible and resilient), and ethically and culturally sensitive approach to writing across academic, civic, and professional spheres.<sup>10</sup>

During its ten-year tenure at UNM (2004-2014), WACommunities hosted five civil rights symposia and more than thirty different literacy colloquia series, writing workshops, and celebrations of student writing focused on enhancing access to higher education by historically excluded groups. Community outreach remained integral in UNM WACommunities programs and events since its inception, seeking to enact critical pedagogies across a broad range of discourse communities (academic, civic, and professional).

### **“The Town-Gown Divide:” Inventing the Salt of Earth Recovery Project through Writing Communities**

Using WACommunities as a conceptual framework for community writing activism, four graduate students and I imagined and implemented the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project to generate and curate a Digital Cuentos archive of stories and memories of

---

<sup>8</sup> Writing Across Communities has been most recently adopted by St. John's University under the direction of Writing Program Administrator, Anne Ellen Geller. For further information see: <<https://www.stjohns.edu/resources/places/writing-across-communities>>

<sup>9</sup> St. John's University. Writing Across Communities. Mission Statement. 15. May 2019. <<https://www.stjohns.edu/resources/places/writing-across-communities>>

<sup>10</sup> For further discussion about Writing Across Communities, see Juan C. Guerra, *Language, Culture, Identity, and Citizenship in College Classrooms and Communities* (Urbana, IL: NCTE-Routledge, 2015).

the members of the historic Local 890 union in Bayard, New Mexico. From January to June 2018, the Salt of the Earth Project Coordinators Elvira Carrizal-Dukes, Steven Romero, Zakery Muñoz, Kelli Lycke-Martin, and I together conceptualized the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project along with community leaders in Bayard, Silver City, and the United Steelworkers Union Local 9424 in Las Cruces, New Mexico. We imagined the project from the onset as a cross-regional and cross-institutional endeavor. Our ultimate goal was to construct a public digital archive of *testimonios* and archival materials from community members about their experiences and memories related to the historic 1950s Empire Zinc Mine strike. A start-up research grant from the UNM Center for Regional Studies provided support for travel and materials for the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project and the Digital Cuentos Writing Workshops in Bayard and Silver City, New Mexico.

From the onset, we sought to engage the cultural rhetorical ecologies of these local communities. At the crossroads of the Southwest, this community has been shaped by indigenous cultures, colonial histories, and mining economies for hundreds of years. The Central Mining District of the region was also the site for one of the most politically robust Mexican American labor unions (Local 890) in the twentieth century. It was my primary goal as chair of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project to cultivate the conditions for deliberative democratic practice and to construct a platform, a safe space for community members to exercise their own voices and represent their own experiences as citizens of this historically complex community.

I looked to Chantal Mouffe's notion of agonistic pluralism as a productive perspective from which to engage deliberative democratic discourse in this highly polarized political environment. Rather than approaching the community writing workshop as a space for reproducing a battleground of enemies, we sought to construct an agora of citizens for engaging adversarial positions. In the *Democratic Paradox*, Mouffe, argues that an adversary, in contrast to an enemy, is "somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question."<sup>11</sup> Antagonism, from this point of view, represents a conflict between enemies whereas agonism represents a conflict between adversaries. Applying Mouffe's notion of agonistic pluralism we hoped to cultivate the community writing workshops in public spaces (within local libraries and museums) as an *agora* (a democratized public sphere) where citizens could engage with each other in the messy work of citizenship, to tell their stories, to advance their own rhetorical positions, to represent their truths and together determine the fate of the historic Local 890 union

---

<sup>11</sup> Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 102.



hall where Mexican American citizens staged one of the most effective labor strikes in U.S. history.

Moreover, as an academic researcher and scholar who has engaged in the slow-research of inquiry, I was determined to keep the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project research findings free, open, and accessible—not buried away in the lengthy, mystified, and protracted process of scholarly publication. It was imperative to me to keep the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project current, relevant, free, accessible, transparent, and inclusive.<sup>12</sup> Above all else, the stories, the murals, the artifacts, and archival materials related to the historic Local 890 union hall needed to remain the intellectual property of the community. We sought to resist the academic practice of cultural extraction and to eschew using research methods that risked appropriating community narrative resources. We concluded that a community writing format would be most efficacious toward these goals.

Hence my team and I painstakingly designed the Salt of the Earth Digital Cuentos Writing Workshops as an open-source, multi-modal platform and implemented what community members fondly referred to as “old school” (analog print text) as well as “new school” (digital online) modalities. All print texts (writing materials) generated by participants remained the property of the participants to take with them or were shredded on site. All digital material was uploaded or “published” by the participants themselves and/or downloaded on a memory stick for participants to take with them. As such, we did not collect any “data” or identifying information about the participants.

Additionally, we implemented bilingual literacy practices by generating workshop materials in both English and Spanish. We facilitated a series of community writing workshops at a variety of public venues to generate an open-access digital archive. The content for the archive was composed entirely by community members themselves as they came to write their own stories and curate their own archival materials together in public spaces. From May to July 2018, our team coordinated and hosted community writing workshops at the University of New Mexico, Western New Mexico University, Silver City Public Library, Silver City Museum, and Bayard Public Library. We generated bilingual promotional flyers and writing prompts in both Spanish and English (See Appendix). We aimed to provide the support, resources, guidance, and opportunity for local community members to write and publish their

---

<sup>12</sup> Local media articles about the Salt of the Recovery Project is available through these newspaper sources, see: *Silver City Sun News* <<https://www.scsun-news.com/story/news/2018/07/19/salt-earth-recovery-project-museum-july-28/792593002/>> and the *Grant County Beat* <<http://www.grantcountybeat.com/news/news-articles/45959-salt-of-the-earth-recovery-project>>

own stories. The circuitous journey that had brought us to the Central Mining District in 2018 had begun some four years before when I first launched research about the women of the Empire Zinc mine strike. Bringing a scholarly understanding of the historical context and the current challenges facing the local community in the aftermath of the recent decertification of Local 890 was critical to the success of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project. The emergence of the Salt of the Earth Recovery remains inextricably aligned with this community's enduring connections to the Cold War era labor activism and the post-World War II Mexican American civil rights movement.

### **The Story of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project: Engaging the Topoi of Writing Across Communities for the Public Sphere**

In October 2014, eight months after the death of Cold War era Mexican American civil rights activist Vicente Ximenes, I read the startling news in the *Albuquerque Journal* that the historic Local 890 made famous by the groundbreaking 1954 film, *The Salt of the Earth*, had voted to decertify the union after more than 72 years of existence. I was drafting the final chapters of *Vicente Ximenes, LBJ's Great Society, and Mexican American Civil Rights Rhetoric* and examining how the cultural rhetorical ecology of New Mexico shaped the rhetorical imagination of post-World War II Mexican American activists like Vicente Ximenes. The use of deliberative practice as political resistance throughout the Cold War Mexican American civil rights movement (and the 1950s Empire Zinc Mine Strike, most specifically) was especially illustrative of how the engagement of public rhetoric across diverse groups can successfully move communities toward democratic pluralism.<sup>13</sup>

With further inquiry, I became puzzled by the conspicuous absence of the voices of the women of Local 890 about their role in the Empire Zinc Mine strike and the conditions influencing the decertification of the historic union after more than seven decades. The film *The Salt of the Earth* had become a powerful icon of the Chicana/o movement through the 1970s. The decertification of Local 890, whose union members were actually featured in the film based on their role in the 1950-52 Empire Zinc mine strike, seemed to happen beneath the notice of the rest of the region. The silence was deafening. This vote to decertify Local 890 became the exigence to explore more deeply how the women involved in the epic Empire Zinc

---

<sup>13</sup> A short history of the role of the 1950s Empire Zinc Mine Strike in the evolution of the Cold War Mexican American Civil Rights movement is available in Kells, *Vicente Ximenes, LBJ's Great Society, and Mexican American Civil Rights Rhetoric*, 86-88.

mine strike of the early 1950s had shaped the rhetorical imagination of the Cold War Mexican American civil rights movement.

Two years later in April 2016, I found myself driving over the Gila Mountains to meet with the leaders of the Local 9424 of the United Steelworkers Union in Las Cruces, New Mexico to discuss the decertification of Local 890 and to see the decommissioned union hall in Bayard, New Mexico. With the decertification of Local 890, the fate of the historic union hall with its remarkable murals and archival materials was uncertain if not threatened. I started asking questions of local historians, scholars, leaders, and public officials about the women of the Local 890 who held the picket line. The history embedded in the archive and the murals painted on the front of the union hall represented one of the most dramatic protests of the Cold War Mexican American civil rights movement.

The Local 890 chapter of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers of Bayard, New Mexico was comprised of 1,400 members of predominantly Mexican American and Mexican-migrant laborers during the early 1950s. The members of the Local 890 launched one of the nation's most effective and groundbreaking strikes, extending fifteen months from October 1950 to January 1952. The deconstruction of ancestral communities into company towns as illustrated in this landmark case provided a catalyst for political activism. The grievances of the Empire Zinc workers included racial discrimination in job duties and unequal pay, toxic work environments, no-strike contract clauses, and inequitable power-sharing between labor and management. The standoff between the women and local law enforcement agents and the resulting incarceration of more than forty women, seventeen children, and a six-month-old baby shocked newspaper reporters and audiences locally and nationally.

The *Silver City Enterprise* reported on July 1, 1951 at the peak of the Empire Zinc mine strike: "Past experience has shown the situation a difficult one and the jailing of nearly 60 women and children brought considerable sorrow to the office of Sheriff Goforth."<sup>14</sup> While local media depicted the women holding the strike line, none of the local media directly interviewed or published the perspectives of the women strikers themselves. Local 890 union activism had deep roots in the Central Mining District in southern New Mexico that long preceded the turbulent show-down with Empire Zinc. The women of the Ladies Auxiliary Local 209 were already mobilizing for gender equality and full inclusion in Local 890 before their groundbreaking role in the Empire Zinc mine strike.

---

<sup>14</sup> "Court Rules in Favor of Empire," *Silver City Enterprise* (Silver City, NM), July 5, 1951, 1.

According to James Lorence in *How Hollywood, Big Labor, and Politicians Blacklisted a Movie in Cold War America*, the political activism of Local 890 members provided the necessary exigencies leading up to the Empire Zinc job action and “the militance of Chicana women in New Mexico actually preceded the long strike of 1950-1952.”<sup>15</sup> In 1949, the women of Ladies Auxiliary Local 209 had drafted and submitted a manifesto titled “Resolution on Equality and Fraternity of Mexican American Women” to the Mexican American male members of Local 890 to challenge historical patterns of gender discrimination and inequitable distribution of power within the union. When the women of the Ladies Auxiliary 209 stepped up to take over the picket lines after law enforcement agencies placed an injunction of the men of Local 890 preventing them from holding the strike line, they were already well-versed in political activist and feminist rhetorics. None of the women who drafted the 1949 “Resolution on Equality and Fraternity of Mexican American Women” or voted to hold the strike line in 1951 survive today. Seven decades later the legacy of the film *The Salt of the Earth* endures as a fictionalized account of the events of the Empire Zinc mine strike while the lives and labor of the women of the Local 209 remain silenced and relegated to historical obscurity.

The story of loss and suffering of the workers of Local 890 and Ladies Auxiliary 2019 still resonates in this small mining community. The battered landscape outside the Central Mining District of Southern New Mexico is a disturbing reminder of the tremendous impact, human as well as environmental, of the multi-national copper mining industry on the high desert landscape. The collective resistance of the women and men of the Local 890 captured regional and national attention, ultimately inspiring independent film producers, Paul and Sylvia Jerrico to make a film based on the incident. The Jerricos first heard about the mine workers strike in Bayard on a trip to New Mexico from Hollywood to attend a gathering of leftist artists, intellectuals, and activists in Taos. They made a journey to Bayard to visit the members of Local 890 and to support their labor efforts. The 1954 film about the women of the Empire Zinc Mine strike became the collaborative artistic and political project of the Jerricos along with local community members who performed and helped to write the script for the film. Screen writers ultimately adopted the trope that become the title of the film, *The Salt of the Earth*<sup>16</sup>.

---

<sup>15</sup> James J. Lorence *How Hollywood, Big Labor, and Politicians Blacklisted a Movie in Cold War America*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 12.

<sup>16</sup> *Salt of the Earth*, produced by Paul Jerrico and Sylvia Jerrico, directed by Herbert J. Biberman, (Independent Productions/International Union of Mine, Mill, & Smelter Workers, 1954; Alpha Video Distributors, 2004).

The decertification of Local 890 union, as such, provided the social catalyst of *paideia* for democratic deliberative action through the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project. Inviting the community to tell their stories and advance their own arguments about the fate of the decommissioned Local 890 union hall represented an occasion for deliberative democracy.

The film offered the organizing trope for the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project, helping us as coordinators provide a rhetorical frame for the Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshops. The triangulation of what we knew about the Cold War Mexican American labor movement with the key principles of WACommunities as a model of civic engagement set the framework for the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project. The *topoi* or framing argument therefore that provided the first principles for designing and implementing the writing workshops these WACommunities ideological assumptions about literacy assert: writing as a cultural ecology is organic; synergistic; holistic; resilient. These five *topoi*, therefore, set the conceptual parameters for the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project and the enactment of the Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshops.

### Writing is Organic

Culture like language, oral as well as written, is a living thing. From the outset, the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project team adopted this first principle of WACommunities for the Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshops. Writing involves an inherently dynamic, unstable, and transformative organic process. Put most simply, culture and language--and by extension, writing as a cultural practice--are conditioned by the same natural cycles of birth (emergence and invention), death (entropy), growth (transformation), and dormancy (incubation) that determine the larger universe which environs (envelopes) us. We see writing as first and foremost an ecology of relationships.

The writing workshops needed to engage these very same organic processes. We needed to accommodate and account for the larger energy cycles in which participants live and work. Recognizing these needs meant expecting that some of our workshop participants would need space and time to grieve the losses about which they wanted to write (death and entropy). Some just came to talk. For others, the moment provided a startling emergent (birth and invention) opportunity. Some came eager and ready to write. Many came looking for encouragement and support in writing their stories (dormancy and incubation). Most came wanting help transcribing, articulating, developing, and narrating the stories buried deep within them. Most



wanted technical support in order to digitize the archival materials and documents they wanted to contribute to the archive. And in one workshop setting at the Silver City Public Library, no one came at all.

### **Writing is Synergistic**

The second *topos* we adopted from WACommunities principles was that writing is inherently creative and synergistic. We needed to allow and cultivate opportunities for synchronicity. In other words, the Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshops needed to be playful, open, invigorating, and generative. We considered the diversity of our target audience first and foremost. We established three workstations or makers' spaces for the workshop. The participants began the writing process at Station One with colored pens and pencils, scratch paper, and a simple writing prompt in Spanish and English, responding to these four framing questions:

1. Describe your experience or knowledge on any of following: Empire Zinc mine strike; Local 890 Union; Bayard Local 890 Union Hall; The Salt of the Earth film.
2. Recall how these experiences and knowledge were significant to you and your community then.
3. Explain why they are still significant today.
4. Tell us what should become of the Local 890 Union Hall in the future.

Next, workshop participants worked with a writing consultant at Station Two to develop their invention notes from the writing prompt into narratives. Finally, another writing consultant assisted participants at Station Three in editing, digitizing, scanning, and uploading their documents to the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project website. I remember watching several participants enthusiastically calling their grandchildren on their flip phones to tell them to "google" them to see their stories on the Salt of the Earth Project website.

### **Writing is Holistic**

The third WACommunities *topos* informing the invention of the Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshop is the pragmatic notion of culture as a holistic system. The part contains the whole and the whole contains the part. Hence, we did not try to saturate the local community with marketing and branding campaigns for the Salt of

Kells

the Earth Recovery Project. We operated on the assumption that the natural ripple effect of information circulation would reach the primary stakeholders in the community. Local citizens had invited us into the community. As such, we decided to allow the community members to control the circulation of information and invite citizens through the local “grapevine” to shape participation.

Moreover, if the parts connect to the whole and whole is contained in the parts, then news of the writing workshops would reach those citizens with the greatest interest (politically, culturally, historically, and socially) in the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project. We hoped that the workshops would be self-selective and naturally representative of the community stakeholders. The risk of taking a saturation marketing model would be to inadvertently catalyze historic “whitelash” and possibly overwhelm the elderly Mexican American Spanish-speaking minority groups in the community with the dominant Anglo majority detractors. We believed that a holistic approach to writing would be the most productive, while also protecting the workshops from becoming hostile writing environments. Our assumptions were correct, and our approach proved largely effective.

### **Writing is Resilient**

The notion of resilience represents the fourth principle and perhaps one of the most important *topos* informing the implementation of Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshops because none of the workshops in practice were actually implemented exactly as planned. We planned and prepared ourselves for the unexpected, and the unexpected became the reality. We did not expect to have a dozen community members waiting for us at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, July 27<sup>th</sup> at the Bayard Public Library, the first day of the Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshop. To complicate matters, one of our writing consultants canceled the day before the workshop for family emergency reasons. Another writing consultant joined us for the first time without any previous experience or training working with the Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshop.

In short, we arrived at the Bayard Public Library, carrying baskets of freshly sharpened pencils, soft pastel-colored scratch paper, whimsical scented pens, a scanner, a TV monitor, two laptop computers, digital memory sticks, and a set of writing prompts. We expected participants would trickle in over the course of the workshop. Instead we found the local citizens waiting for us, lined up along the walls in the library conference room. I quickly began helping participants write their stories with a note app on my iPhone while Kelli, Zakery, and Elvira opened up their laptops

and started assisting writers one by one. We took turns helping the participants snap “selfies,” scanning archival materials, and uploading their documents. The TV monitor projected their uploaded stories and images as soon as they were published on the Salt of the Earth Project website. Some of the participants began calling other community members on their cell phones to come join the exuberant chaos at the Bayard Public Library. A few participants, led by Rachel Valencia, a lifetime Bayard citizen and survivor of the Empire Zinc mine strike, helped edit and give feedback to the new arrivals. In sum, without resilience, neither the synergistic or organic processes of writing can or will happen.

### Writing is a Cultural Ecology

“Ecology” as an organizing *topos* helped us situate the writing workshops within the cultural rhetorical ecology of the local community. To understand the concept of ecology at its root term *oikos* (home), we engaged the occasion to share stories within these public locations from a stance of hospitality and reverence. This notion ultimately allowed us to cultivate the conditions for what evolved into remarkable generative acts of self-authorization by the participants in the workshops. I will always remember the moment I met Rachel Valencia. She was among the first community members to arrive at the Bayard Public Library on that Friday morning. My graduate students and I glided through the glass doors like a circus parade carrying our flyers, writing prompts, colored papers, techie equipment, and rag-tag assorted materials in a flurry of excitement and anticipation.

Citizens stood, waiting for us with their own memorabilia of vintage photos, old union posters, bumper stickers, Local 890 flyers, newspaper articles, and Chino Mine newsletters from the Cold War era. Rachel approached me directly as we set up the stations for the writing workshop. She asked me what the mission was for the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project. Rachel queried me about our process, our goals, and our intentions. She similarly interrogated each member of the team. She watched. She listened. And then she came to me and said, “I have seen so many activist types come here to push their own agendas over the years. Then we never hear from them again. They take our stories; push their politics, and they leave.” I immediately recalled these same expressed fears I had encountered by other community leaders with their tales of outside agitators coming into the Central Mining District. I briefly mentioned to Rachel my recollections of reading newspaper reports about the Brown Berets arriving in 1971 and staging a protest in Silver City as described by the Western New Mexico University newspaper *The Mustang*:

An unexpected, unannounced, and unwelcome visit was bestowed on Western New Mexico University by members of the Brown Beret organization that was stationed in Grant County. The Berets, termed by the Associated Press as a militant far-left Chicano organization, visited Western several times in attempts to encourage Mexican American students to aid them in their cause of social revolution.<sup>17</sup>

“Yes,” she said, “That’s what I’m talking about. Outsiders come here to push their own agendas!” Rachel sat facing me and began to share her story. She started to recount her own memories of the Empire Zinc Mine Strike. Rachel said: “Sometime during the summer, as the women were picketing, the district attorney Thomas Foy, gave the sheriff and some deputies permission to break the women’s picket line. We didn’t anticipate the violence that would come.” Rachel paused and showed me her hands. She told me that she had walked out of a conference celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Salt of the Earth* because outside agitators had used the event to promote their own political agenda. “I can see that you aren’t doing that here,” she concluded. Then, she stood up and said that she was ready to write down her story.<sup>18</sup> Rachel remained at the workshop for some two hours writing, talking, and helping other participants edit their narratives for the Digital Cuentos website. As a retired high school English teacher, Rachel had spent her working life teaching literacy in the Central Mining District. As she was getting ready to leave the workshop, Rachel asked me to write down the website URL for the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project Digital Cuentos and then poignantly told me, “I’m going to give this website to my grandchildren. I never really told them about my experiences in the strike.”

### **Testimonios: Enduring Cold War Rhetorics and Border Histories**

More than sixty-five years after the Empire Zinc Mine Strike, I am inspired by the moral courage of the leaders of Local 890 and their descendants who are keeping the story alive in Bayard. This story continues to reach across generation, class, race, gender, and national boundaries. The power of moral courage, like the Empire Zinc Mine Strike, extends through our collective consciousness to stir our souls when we need it most. After more than six decades, those stories ripple across time in the sites,

---

<sup>17</sup> Jerry Walz, “Berets Visit Western,” *The Mustang*. (Silver City), November 23, 1971, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Rachel Juarez Valencia. Digital Cuentos. Salt of the Earth Recovery Project. <<https://saltoftheearthrecoveryproject.wordpress.com/>> 10 December 2018.

images, and narratives surrounding the preservation and protection of the Local 890 union hall. In follow-up to the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project, local leaders have since constituted *ad hoc* advisory groups to shape the public memory and chart the future of the historic union hall.

The leadership demonstrated by the women of the Empire Zinc Mine Strike represents one of the most compelling and inspiring moments of civic activism in U.S. history. The legacy and sacrifice of these leaders remain inscribed in the murals, narratives, and paintings of the Local 890 Union Hall. These are the *testimonios*, the resonances breaking the silence. This is the very purpose of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project: to celebrate the lives, labor, and leadership of the women and men of Local 890. Complicating the narrative of democracy with dissent, difference, and deliberation has always enlarged the U.S. rhetorical imagination. If there is a moment when we needed to complicate our story of self-governance and civic engagement, it is *this* moment of unabashed white nationalism, unfettered xenophobia, and unrestrained male heteronormative hegemony.

Triangulating my findings from over twenty years of archival research on the Cold War Mexican American civil rights movement with the fifteen-year trajectory of WACommunities as a resistance model of WAC for K-16 institutionalized literacy education and the past three years imagining and implementing the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project all underscore the generative scope of civil rights discourse as epistemic rhetoric. These alignments reaffirm my commitment to opening up community spaces for deliberative democratic practice within and beyond the academy, working toward a more inclusive, more diverse, and more sustainable future. Our experiences constellating WACommunities principles and practices through community writing practices with the Digital Cuentos platform of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project suggest productive strategies for serving and supporting shelter-in-place student writers grappling with the implications of belonging to this current COVID-19 generation. The distinct challenges we as teachers face working, writing, and advocating for vulnerable student populations across a digital divide will require a deliberate effort to humanize literacy education across communities. As Robin Wall Kimmerer reflects in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, “Language is our gift and our responsibility.”<sup>19</sup>

Constituting open access educational environments (in and beyond the classroom) must be organic, resilient, synergistic, and holistic. As a dynamic ecology

---

<sup>19</sup> Robin Wall Kimmerer. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. (Minneapolis: Milkweed Press, 2013), 347.



of relationships, I would urge advocates and teachers in open access institutions to strategically resist overly-determined (what I call “Big Comp”) models of literacy education and seek pedagogical approaches that cultivate small circles for writing, sharing, and supporting writers engaged in the struggle to tell their own stories. We need to be careful not to engage students as consumers in big data online practices that mine our students’ personal resources and then turn the raw material of their experience into narratives of extraction. Approaching students as citizens helps to resist the tendency within neo-liberal corporate university models that construct students as consumers and markets and reduce ethnolinguistic identity to property. As Juan Guerra argues in *Language, Culture, Identity, and Citizenship in College Classrooms and Communities*, our students are first and always citizens-in-the-making.

The work of citizenship involves rhetorically navigating systems of power and taking a role in governance of the public commons. Incorporating community-based writing in open access college classrooms, as such, is inherently political, adversarial, and controversial. Backlash is an inevitable outcome. The *paideia* of community-based writing is so multi-directional—writing from, writing with, writing to, and writing about who and where we are positioned as citizens. It is so intuitive and so threatening because by coming to tell our stories and writing ourselves as citizen scholars we ultimately bridge the distance between us. We are all experts of our own experience. The challenges are tremendous.

By and large, the academy as the arbiter of knowledge-making resists this kind of intellectual porosity and partnership. We cannot expect educational institutions to readily welcome de-centering literacy education away from the dominant discourse of academic authority. History tells us that arbiters of authority never share power without struggle. While writing about civil rights activist Vicente Ximenes I soon learned that he was asked to leave his position as an economist and researcher at the University of New Mexico because of his labor activism in New Mexico throughout the 1950s. Similarly, the women of the Local 890 struggled for gender equality and fair labor practices and faced serving jail sentences for their activism. Those stories risk erasure. Like the story of Vicente Ximenes, the women of the Empire Zinc mine strike have remained relegated to historical obscurity for some seventy years. The fiction of the film evolved over time into a kind of presence to fill the absence of their personal narratives. Rachel Valencia, who was a twelve-year-old girl standing in for her adult relatives on the day she was hauled into the Bayard jail, is the only living survivor today of the historic Empire Zinc mine strike. She was the only survivor to ever write and publish her own story—and that opportunity was made available through the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project.

Finally, as an allegory of the future of writing programs, WACommunities while flourishing at open admission institutions across the nation over the past fifteen years, has yet to receive the administrative support and institutional recognition it has achieved in these other colleges and universities.<sup>20</sup> Hence, only by enacting WACommunities as an intellectual commonwealth that crosses over academic, professional, and civic spheres—both institutionally and regionally—is it possible to realize the full spectrum of rhetorical agency. If we are not overly invested in controlling our textual outcomes (as intellectual property for exclusive academic audiences) and our own positions as scholars and experts (as platforms for illusive extrinsic rewards of the academy), we can invigorate the deliberative sphere with new voices, new visions, and new stories that leaders like Rachel Valencia write for themselves.

Keeping a current of democratizing discourses flowing through our university writing programs is critical to resisting the increasing corporatization of the university and the enabling role of writing program administration in standardizing and homogenizing the inherent ethnolinguistic diversity and intellectual pluralism of our student populations. WACommunities resists this growing tendency in the field of Composition Studies and challenges writing programs to become more culturally responsive and structurally de-centered. Otherwise, we risk reproducing the dominant narratives of oppressive educational systems which replicate themselves hierarchically to benefit those already in power and to serve the most elite (rather than the most vulnerable) constituencies in our communities.

The increasing trend within Writing Program Administration (WPA) toward appropriating the role of public fiduciary over the institutional resources of literacy education as the intellectual property of WPAs themselves and the university administration risks turning our writing programs into “company towns” and our classrooms into mining operations for textbook companies extracting the cultural resources of local communities for profit-centered enterprises. The institutional administrative backlash that ultimately dismantled WACommunities at UNM, in turn, serendipitously aligned with the formation of Salt of the Earth Recovery Project and the eventual mobilization of UNM faculty and graduate students toward unionization during the Spring 2019. When the *LatinoUSA* documentary about the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project was released in April 2019 by National Public Radio, UNM graduate

---

<sup>20</sup> The University of New Mexico Writing Across Communities digital archive and website was deactivated in 2019 by the UNM administration. For an open source archive of WACommunities online resources and support materials see: <<https://sites.google.com/site/resourcewac>>

students were coincidentally organizing a Walk Out in solidarity with the faculty movement toward unionization (Figure 3).

Interesting, the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project emerged within a kind of regional political chiasmus with the decertification of the ill-fated Local 890 in 2014 and then the emergence of the UNM union in 2019. Reflective of historical anti-union patterns, UNM administration hired a nationally recognized “union busting” legal team through 2018-2019 at the same time as the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project was gaining traction in Southern New Mexico. As the flagship institution of the state with branch campuses throughout the region, UNM ultimately adopted some of the same retaliatory and obstructionist tactics implemented by the multi-national mining companies in Southern New Mexico during the Cold War era. Whereas the strategic erasure of historical memory by public institutions in Southern New Mexico and the sustained targeting of union organizers and supporters by multi-national extraction industry prevailed with the ultimate decertification of Local 890 in September 2014, these same anti-union tactics did not overtake the unionization movement at UNM five years later.<sup>21</sup>

The history of social justice movements indicates that democracy does not follow a linear trajectory of change. It is a chiasmus, a braiding, a continuous spiral of change and resistance. The struggle to protect fair labor at the Chino Mine succumbed in Bayard, New Mexico with a vote 236-83 to decertify the 72-year-old Local 890 union in 2014. However, as the UNM faculty union vote demonstrated, the unionization movement in New Mexico did not die out completely. Five years later, in an unprecedented show of support, two-thirds of UNM faculty ultimately voted to approve unionization five years later in October 2019 in spite of the sustained repressive and retaliatory tactics by the administration and board of regents of the largest institution of higher learning in the state (Figure 4).<sup>22</sup> Within these shifting political currents and turbulent cultural rhetorical ecologies of New Mexico, the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project found both local and national traction. Evolving from a local grassroots advocacy research project, the story about the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project quickly transformed into a nationally circulated documentary.

---

<sup>21</sup> Olivier Uytendaele, “End of the Line for Chinos Storied Union.” *Albuquerque Journal* (Albuquerque, NM), October 12, 2014, A1.

<sup>22</sup> Ryan Boetel. “UNM Faculty Wins Landslide.” *Albuquerque Journal* (Albuquerque, NM), October 18, 2019. <<https://www.abqjournal.com/1380231/unm-faculty-approve-unions.html>>

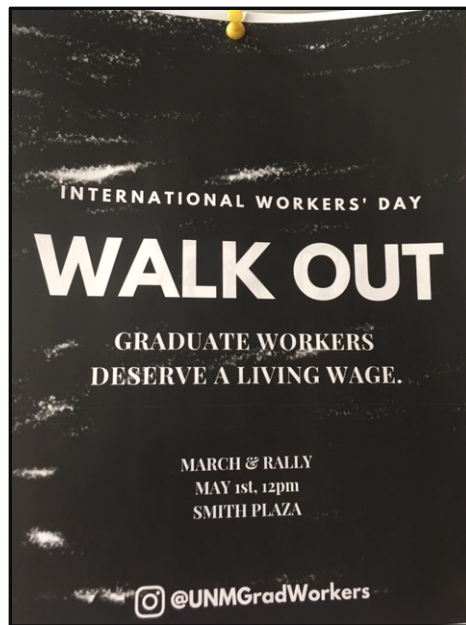


Figure 3: UNM Graduate Students staged university-wide labor protest and walk-out on May 1, 2019 in solidarity with unionization movement.

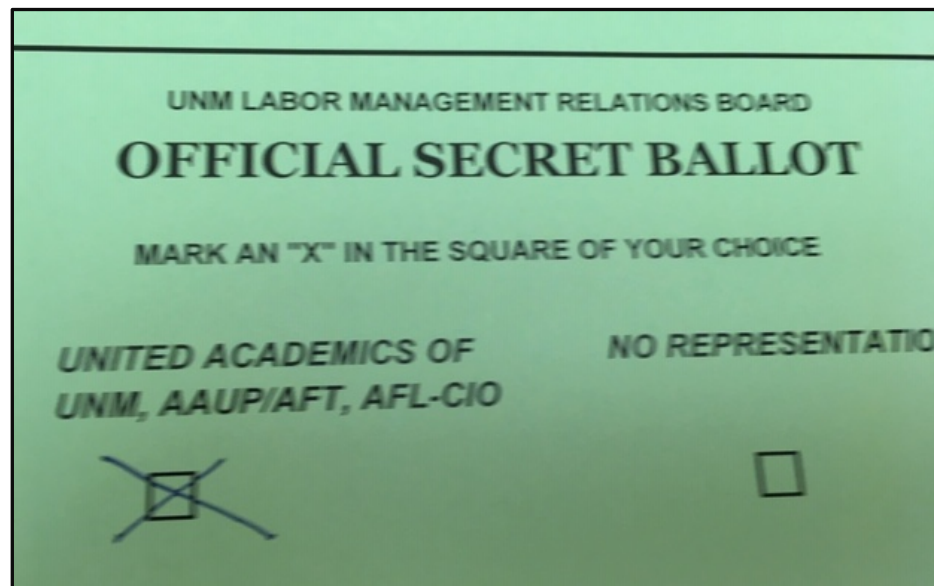


Figure 4: In a historic vote, UNM faculty voted to approve unionization with United Academics of UNM, AAUP/AFT, AFL-CIO in October 2019.

Sayre Quevado, associate producer of National Public Radio's *LatinoUSA* contacted me in October 2018 immediately following the completion of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project. He had learned about the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project through the local grapevine and asked to interview me in Bayard, New Mexico to discuss the process and outcomes of the project. I queried the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project coordinators as well as the local citizens of Bayard. With their approval, I personally shared my story of launching the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project and provided Sayre Quevado and National Public Radio host Maria Hinojosa with over two hours of interviews. I conducted these NPR interviews in the Bayard Public Library, the local M&A café, and by phone for the *LatinoUSA* documentary "And They Will Inherit It" which was released on May 1, 2019.<sup>23</sup> Other community members came to tell their stories as well.

Since my team and I did not gather personal contact information about any of the participants in the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project, I had no insider information to offer the NPR research team when they drove into Bayard cross-county from New York City in November 2018. The production crew soon discovered upon arrival that they needed to exercise patience and just wait for the local citizens to reach out to them. When asked for guidance, I advised Quevado and his production team to simply make themselves available to anyone who wished to share their stories at the local library. They did as I suggested. And many of the citizens who participated in the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project elected to come out and contribute to the *LatinoUSA* documentary. Rachel Valencia, however, did not. Her absence from the documentary is telling. The only other survivors of the Empire Zinc mine strike died within weeks of the NPR research visit to Bayard. The silence remains deafening.

My team and I sought to privilege, first and foremost, historically marginalized voices in telling their stories of the landmark Cold War era Empire Zinc Mine Strike. The community response for the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project was not only overwhelming; it was awe-inspiring. The safety and solidarity constituted among allies and advocates opened a space for an outpouring of storytelling. The Salt of the Earth Recovery Project participants exercised authority and retained agency over their own texts, their own writing, and their own stories. Our team simply provided the conduit for circulating their stories and the publishing the cultural materials they wanted to share. The community came to us. In turn, we simply provided the media and the means for citizen scholars to exercise authorship. They remained the experts of their

---

<sup>23</sup> Sayre Quevado. "And They Will Inherit It." National Public Radio LatinoUSA. Documentary. <<https://www.latinousa.org/2019/05/01/empirezincstrike/>>



own histories. Likewise, open access educational spaces need to protect students' right to resist and take authority over their own writing. Furthermore, as writing teachers and researchers we should not be mining and extracting student writing from local institutions as raw intellectual capital for producing textbooks and fueling the textbook industry. Educational resistance in this current national political climate, however, can become an act of civil disobedience.

### **Implications for Teaching Writing in Open Access Colleges and Universities**

The Cold War Mexican American civil rights movement and the Empire Zinc Mine strike remind us that civil disobedience always has its costs, visible and invisible. There are inevitable consequences of resistance. The emotional, psychological, spiritual, and social outcomes of taking a stance against the dominant discourse are often carried for a lifetime. The community members who risked their lives and personal wellbeing to hold the picket line and then tell their stories seventy years later through the Salt of the Recovery Project spoke of the residual loss, ostracism, and trauma. The glorification of the post-World War II civil rights movement direct-action events, like the Empire Zinc Mine Strike, unwittingly masks the enduring collective trauma, personal losses, and embodied pain that endures long after the battle is won. These are important take-away points for those of us teaching writing in open access institutions that serve historically excluded student populations. The right to remain silent is as important as the right to speak. The key take-away for us as literacy educators illustrates that building community partnerships that efficaciously engage the “the available means of persuasion” and the robust range of academic discourses in service to the work of enhancing the agency of vulnerable communities is possible and rich with possibility.

As writing instructors of historically underserved citizens, we can cultivate the conditions that allow our students to represent the perspectives and narratives of their journeys. By constituting makers' spaces within our classrooms, writing centers, studios, and workshops that engage the *topoi* of WACommunities, we can invite emerging writers into academic, professional, and civic discourses. When we operate on the assumption that writing is organic, synergistic, holistic, resilient, and that it represents a cultural ecology of relationships we honor the languages, literacies, and legacies of writers. WACommunities offers a framework that encourages us as teaches to constitute writing habitats within which the translingual, transgenre, transcultural, and transnational identities and experiences of our students become productive

rhetorical *topoi*, those rich places where our students' own arguments are constructed and found.

Finally, the growing hispanicization of twenty-first century U.S. society demands greater attention within and outside the academy foregrounding Latina political and social histories. Sexual violence, discrimination, erasure, and marginalization remain insidiously gendered. There was no erasing the political, racial, economic or social binaries across which the women of Local 890 transgressed to hold the picket line and risk their own safety and security (as well as the safety and security of their own children). Enduring economic, health, political, educational, and professional disparities among groups reinforce the need not only for sustained engagement with civil rights rhetorics, but also for more histories of the rhetoric employed by Latina leaders in their own civil rights struggles. The current public health pandemic disproportionately impacting vulnerable communities and people of color along with the human rights crises on our southern borders where tens of thousands of environmental refugees from South and Central America seek asylum (women and children detained and deported in staggering numbers) collapse the boundaries between immigration, civil rights, ecology, and humanitarian issues in ways that will continue to agitate the limits of the U.S. political imagination throughout the twenty-first century.

The scarcity of scholarship about the work of Latina leaders in K-16 literacy education is slowly being addressed in the field of Rhetoric and Composition.<sup>24</sup> As an increasingly threatened population, immigrant communities across the Americas are facing growing educational, linguistic, cultural, and political conditions that threaten the safety and survival of millions of women and children. The need for strengthening the educational bridge between K-16 and university-level education has never been more critical.<sup>25</sup> The false divisions erected between the work of elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educational leaders ultimately balkanize literacy education for

---

<sup>24</sup> Jessica Enoch, *Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1864-1911* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> To extend the conversation on Latina leadership in literacy education across the curriculum see: Laura Gonzáles and Michelle Hall Kells, eds. *Latina Leadership: Language and Literacy Education Across Communities*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, Forthcoming).

Latina (as well as Latino) student populations and create intellectual hierarchies to the detriment of historically underserved and politically vulnerable student populations.<sup>26</sup> Like the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project, we need to make more visible Latina leaders in the public sphere. We need to support Latina leadership across the curriculum in open admission as well as research-level institutions to map the future of literacy education for a threatened generation. The voices of women leaders like Rachel Valencia remind us as teachers that our scholarly lives are always political, always consequential, and always engaged in the necessary messiness of knowledge-making across communities.<sup>27</sup>

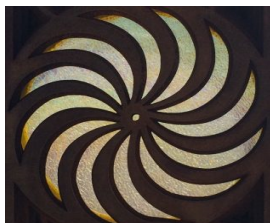
---

<sup>26</sup> I prefer using the term “Latina” to honor the self-representation of Latina grassroots activists through history and to problematize the cover term “Latinx” currently in circulation in academic and intellectual communities. Consistent with self-ascribing labeling practices of Latin American women, mestiza social activists, and working-class Latinas, I resist erasing the historical institutionalized discrimination of women of color by adopting the gender neutralizing adoption of “x” for the purposes of this article.

<sup>27</sup> I wish to extend a special thanks to Kristina Gutierrez, Yndalecio Hinojosa, Sue Hum, and Anne Ellen Geller for their generous and insightful guidance through the writing of this article.

## Appendix 1

### LA SAL DE LA TIERRA, PROYECTO DE RECUPERACIÓN *TALLER COMUNITARIO DE ESCRITURA DE CUENTOS DIGITALES*



**Visite el *Taller comunitario de escritura de cuentos digitales*,  
traiga sus historias, fotos clásicas y demás recuerdos para compartir.**

Los asesores de La Sal de la Tierra, proyecto de recuperación, estarán disponibles para acompañarle en la escritura del borrador, la digitalización y la inserción en la red de sus historias. Además de darle recomendaciones para el futuro.

El viernes, 27 de Julio, 2018  
9:00 a.m to 12:00 p.m.  
Bayard Public Library

El Viernes, 27 de Julio, 2018  
1:00 P.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Silver City Public Library

El Sabodo, 28 de Julio, 2018  
10:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M.  
Silver City Museum

DIGITAL CUENTOS  
<https://saltoftheearthrecoveryproject.wordpress.com/>

#### **Misión**

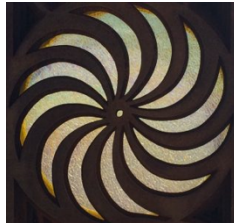
La misión de La Sal de la Tierra, proyecto de recuperación, es reconocer las vidas, quehaceres y liderazgo de mujeres y hombres del Local 890 y conmemorar su rol revolucionario en la huelga en la Mina Empire Zinc desarrollada en los años 1950 a 1952.

#### **Visión**

La visión de La Sal de la Tierra, proyecto de recuperación, es honrar las historias de mujeres y hombres del Local 890 y apoyar la restauración y preservación del ayuntamiento del Local 890 en Bayard, Nuevo México, para el beneficio de la comunidad, los ciudadanos de Nuevo México y la memoria histórica de la nación.

## Appendix 2

### THE SALT OF THE EARTH RECOVERY PROJECT *DIGITAL CUENTOS COMMUNITY WRITING WORKSHOP*



#### **Drop-in Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshop Bring your Stories, Vintage Photos, & Other Memorabilia to Share**

The Salt of the Recovery Project Writing workshop consultants will be available to assist you with drafting, digitizing, and uploading your stories & recommendations.

#### **Dates & Locations**

Friday, July 27, 2018  
9:00 a.m to 12:00 p.m.  
Bayard Public Library

Friday, July 27, 2018  
1:00 P.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Silver City Public Library

Saturday, July 28, 2018  
10:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M.  
Silver City Museum

#### **DIGITAL CUENTOS**

<https://saltoftheearthrecoveryproject.wordpress.com/>

#### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project is to recognize the lives, labor, and leadership of the women and men of Local 890 and celebrate their groundbreaking role in the 1950-1952 Empire Zinc Mine Strike.

#### **Vision Statement**

The vision of the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project is to honor the stories of the women and men of Local 890 and to support restoration and preservation of the Local 890 Union Hall in Bayard, New Mexico for the benefit of the local community, the citizens of New Mexico, and the historic memory of the nation.



### Appendix 3



#### **Salt of the Earth Recovery Project Digital Cuentos**

#### **Writing Workshop Guidelines**

¡Bienvenidos!

Welcome to the Salt of the Earth Recovery Project  
Digital Cuentos Community Writing Workshop!

This is a Community Writing Workshop and Maker Space. We are here to help you share your story. At the end of the workshop, you can view your and other participant's stories at the *Salt of the Earth* Recovery Project website here: <https://saltoftheearthrecoveryproject.wordpress.com/>

- ✓ Step 1: Steven will help you organize your story on a worksheet.
- ✓ Step 2: Zakery will help develop your story.
- ✓ Step 3: Kelli & Elvira will help you publish your final story and other materials on the website.

## Appendix 4



### Salt of the Earth Recovery Project Digital Cuentos

#### Taller Comunitario de Escritos Reglas Writing Workshop Guidelines

Bienvenidos al proyecto de recuperación, salt of the earth, taller comunitario de escritura de cuentos digitales.

Este es un taller comunitario de escritura y un espacio de innovación. Estamos aquí para ayudarlos a compartir sus historias. Al final del taller, pueden ver su historia y las de otros participantes en el sitio web de Salt of the Earth, Proyecto de Recuperación: <https://saltoftheearthrecoveryproject.wordpress.com/>

- ✓ Paso 1: Steven le ayudará a organizar su historia en una hoja de trabajo.
- ✓ Paso 2: Zakery le ayudará a desarrollar su historia.
- ✓ Paso 3: Kelli y Elvira le ayudará a publicar su historia final y otros materiales en el sitio web.

## Appendix 5



### Salt of the Earth Recovery Project Digital Cuentos

#### Writing Workshop Worksheet

---

1. Describe your experience or knowledge any of following:
  - The Empire Zinc mine strike
  - The Local 890 Union
  - The Bayard Local 890 Union Hall
  - The Salt of the Earth film
2. Recall how these experiences and knowledge were significant to you and your community then.
3. Explain why they are still significant today.
4. Tell us what should become of the Local 890 Union Hall in the future?

## Appendix 6



### **Salt of the Earth Recovery Project Digital Cuentos**

#### **Taller de Escritos Oja de Trabajo**

---

1. Describa sus experiencias o conocimiento de alguno de los siguientes hechos:
  - La huelga de la mina Empire Zinc
  - La Unión Local 890
  - Bayard Local 890 Union Hall
  - La película Salt of the Earth
2. Recuerde cómo estas experiencias y conocimientos fueron importantes para usted y su comunidad en ese momento.
3. Explique por qué todavía son importantes hoy.
4. Cuéntenos qué debería pasar con el Local 890 Union Hall en el futuro

Kells

## References

- Clahchischiligi, Sunnie Rae. "Nowhere is Remote Anymore." *New York Times* (New York), April 20, 2020.  
<<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/20/opinion/coronavirus-navajo-nation.html>>
- Enoch, Jessica. *Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1864-1911*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.
- Guerra, Juan C. *Language, Culture, Identity, and Citizenship in College Classrooms and Communities* (Urbana, IL: NCTE-Routledge, 2015).
- Kells, Michelle Hall. *Vicente Ximenes, LBJ's Great Society, and Mexican American Civil Rights Rhetoric*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2018.
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Press, 2013.
- Lorence, James, J. *How Hollywood, Big Labor, and Politicians Blacklisted a Movie in Cold War America*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999.
- Mouffe, Chantal. *The Democratic Paradox*. Brooklyn: Verso, 2009.
- Owens, Derek. *Composition and Sustainability: Teaching for a Threatened Generation*. Urbana: NCTE, 2001.

## About the Author

**Michelle Hall Kells** is Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of New Mexico where she teaches graduate and undergraduate classes in Rhetoric and Writing. Kells served as Program Chair of the Writing Across Communities (WACommunities) initiative at UNM 2004-2014. She is currently Program Chair for the National Consortium of Environmental Rhetoric and Writing (an affiliated organization of the Rhetoric Society of America). Kells also serves as Project Chair of the *Salt of the Earth Recovery Project*. Kells's scholarship centers of the public rhetoric of citizenship. Her research interests include public rhetoric (civil rights and environmental discourses), ethnolinguistic diversity, literacy education, and community writing studies.



Kells is lead editor of *Attending to the Margins: Writing, Researching, and Teaching on the Front Lines* (Heinemann, 1999) and *Latino/a Discourses: On Language, Identity, and Literacy Education* (Heinemann, 2004). Her work is featured in the journals *TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*, *JAC*, *Written Communication*, *Journal of Reflections*, *Journal of Community Literacy*, *Praxis*, and *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* as well as a number of edited books including *Cross-Language Relations in Composition, Dialects, Englishes, Creoles, and Education*; *Who Belongs in America?: Presidents, Rhetoric, and Immigration*. Kells is the author of *Hector P. Garcia: Everyday Rhetoric and Mexican American Civil Rights* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2006). Her recent book release is *Vicente Ximenes, LBJ's "Great Society," and Mexican American Civil Rights Rhetoric* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2018). She currently working on a new edited volume with K-16 Latina scholars across the nation with lead editor Laura Gonzalez (University of Florida), *Latina Leadership: Language and Literacy Education Across Communities* (Syracuse University Press).

*Open Words: Access and English Studies* is an open-access, peer-review scholarly journal, published on the WAC Clearinghouse and supported by Colorado State University. Articles are published under a Creative Commons BY-NC-ND license (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs).

ISSN: 2690-3911 (Print) 2690-392X (Online).