

**Princeton Theological Seminary**

**Empowering La Comunidad Latina  
Creating a Faculty and Curriculum for a Transformative Seminary Education**

**Princeton Theological Seminary  
David T. Abalos  
March 29, 2012**

## **Four Kinds of Education and Seminarian Development**

The development of the young seminarian is stunted and arrested when we prepare them to become unquestioning followers of the values of their family, church and society practicing the story of uncritical loyalty. The development of their consciousness is dominated by uncritical loyalty. They are educated to avoid conflict and change and to emphasize continuity and cooperation with authority figures like their parents, pastors and seminary teachers and to stress security. Everything is seen as the result of God's will.

Young seminary students who are educated and socialized to be aggressive, individualistic and competitive above all have their development slanted towards domination over others. Their main concern is to achieve power. Their upbringing emphasizes conflict and change above cooperation and continuity in order to achieve self interest and power. Their development is warped by seeing others as weak and as potential enemies in contests for power. Their lord is a capitalistic god who inspires them to equate the attainment of power with salvation.

The most debilitating kind of training for seminary students is to prepare them to cripple others in the story of tribalism. Such students are socialized to believe on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, or skin color that they are superior to others. In their development they are trained to stress change and conflict and to use continuity and cooperation with others only as long as it serves their purpose to maintain the lowly status of others and to achieve their total domination. Their god is a violent god who reaches down to support them as they keep the inferior in their place.

The great task is the education and development of seminarians to prepare themselves together with others to create a fundamentally more compassionate and just society. Their focus will be on changing and conflicting with people and structures in the society that have institutionalized the inferiority of others and to cooperate with others in achieving the continuity of the best principles of our churches and society, equality and justice based on love. Such development means becoming co-creators with the God of transformation in the ongoing task of continuing creation.

**The following is an excerpt from a letter sent to President Iain Torrence on the situation of Latinas/os here at PTS written to him in the summer of 2010**

July 20, 2010

President Iain Torrance  
Princeton Theological Seminary  
Princeton, NJ 08540

Dear President Torrance:

Allow me to introduce myself. I am an alumnus of Princeton Seminary who received his Ph.D. in 1972. I was an unusual student since I was a Roman Catholic teaching Religious Studies at a Catholic University. During my four years at PTS I received an excellent education. I made full use of the connection between the Seminary and the University. Because of this wonderful relationship I was able to take courses in Politics, Sociology and Anthropology at the University in preparation for my Comps. In addition through special permission my dissertation director was Prof. Manfred Halpern, a professor of politics at the University. He was for me an extraordinary guide throughout the process of writing my dissertation and for many years to come. Following the completion of doctoral studies I returned to Seton Hall University from which I was on leave to finish my studies. Because of my education at PTS and the University I was given a joint appointment in Religious Studies and Sociology. I was blessed to have an outstanding experience at Seton Hall.

In another aspect of my academic life I was given appointments as a Visiting Professor at both Yale and Princeton University. I was awarded these appointments due to my scholarship in the areas of Latino religion and politics. This academic pursuit arose out of my search for identity. As a son of Mexican parents I felt a need to know my own heritage and to make it available to others through scholarship and teaching. I was invited to teach a course at Yale on Latinos in the United States for four successive Spring semesters. At Princeton I was asked to create a course for the Politics Department in 1981 that became a permanent offering of the Department: Latino Politics in the United States. I was to teach this course many times over during the next 28 years as a Visiting Professor the most recent being a four year appointment from 2006-2009.

It was especially during my time at Princeton University that I became involved in the development of Latino Studies. In 1985 five of my Chicano/Mexican students wrote a Report to President Bowen on the Status of Latino Students at Princeton. In the Introduction to the Study they made this remarkable statement:

Since 1970 Princeton University has actively recruited and admitted students from Latino backgrounds, primarily from a Chicano or Puerto Rican heritage. This response of the University to our needs as a people was commendable....Since that optimistic period of the victory of a civil rights attitude we feel that Princeton University has also been affected by the national regression. Although as a group Latinos have been recruited

and admitted, we feel a structural refusal to accept us as valuable members of the University community. ...although Princeton has had Latino students for the past 15 years the University has not changed in order to reflect our presence in its own institutional makeup. Princeton is really saying, “You need us, we don’t need you.” ...We come to this sad yet harsh conclusion because Princeton does not acknowledge our existence-- as a group of people with a specific culture and history that we insist on nourishing—at the very core of its educational essence: curriculum, faculty, or academic administration. By this refusal the University seeks to render us invisible as a group and thereby makes us unacceptable as anything other than assimilated individuals who become Princeton students to the extent that we become like the rest of Princeton’s students, white and middle-class. The University thus ...makes a political decision to render us rugged individualist with no recognition and celebration of the heritage which is largely responsible for the particular gifts with which we come to Princeton. Our uniqueness as a people enriches Princeton; to prevent that wealth from emerging is to impoverish us and the whole community.

We have written this report as the beginning of a dialogue with the University community. But good dialogue has results, concrete results that meet the needs of both sides. Concrete results that are structural, that is, that reflect the entire makeup of the University and particularly its academic makeup will indicate that the University is serious in its commitment and response. We want no more annual catharsis wherein the administration asks us to “talk out our problems”. The following year nothing has changed and the need is created for another purging of the emotions that always ends with uneasy smiles and handshakes because it is essentially dishonest. Our hope is to create an environment of honest reflection and action. It is then with the spirit of openness and expectation that we wish to meet with you to begin a process of dialogue characterized by mutual respect and concern.

Forgive me for taking the liberty of such a long quote but the comments made within the Report powerfully encapsulate how many of us as Latina/o alumni, students and the rare Latino faculty member and administrator feel about Princeton Seminary. As in the case of Princeton University, the Seminary is out of touch with the reality of the demographics of US society. (The situation changed dramatically at the University once President Bowen met with the students and initiated a series of changes which are still on-going: the hiring of Latino faculty and administrators, the appointment of several Latinos to the Board of Trustees and more recently the establishment of a Latino Studies Program in the Fall of 2009).

Recently I experienced a similar wonderful response to our Latino community here at Princeton Seminary. Two years ago I had the good fortune almost by

accident to be present at several meetings and functions sponsored by the HTI and more recently this year's HTCI conference organized and sponsored by the Seminary's HTI..... When I heard a description of the program planned for the day given by Ms. Joanne Rodriguez, the HTI Director, I was impressed by the assistance being given to young Latina/o scholars as they prepared for their comps or the writing of their dissertation. In all of my years since graduating from PTS I have never seen such an outstanding effort any where else than that being sponsored by the Seminary to prepare Latina/o scholars and for this I commend you and your administration.

And yet in spite of this wonderful initiative if one looks at the Seminary curriculum, the faculty, administration and Board of Trustees they are devoid of the Latino presence. Just as in the case of the Latino students at Princeton, we are on the whole not taken seriously. And yet good theology is authentic only because it is a theology in context, that is, it reflects the reality of the Church as a cross section of the community which is the Body of Christ. So I ask is it possible for Princeton Seminary to teach the Word of God, that is, share the Spirit of Truth, in its curriculum and structural makeup without including the many millions of Latina women and men in this country? There is no diocese in the United States that does not contain a growing number of Latino peoples. And we know that this community has needs that cry out for justice as the anawim of God. Many, especially the undocumented live in a diaspora of poverty, invisibility and vulnerability. As one of our great Latin American theologians, Juan Luis Segundo, has said: "Any sacramental activity that is not related to the needs of the people is irrelevant"

Just as my students wrote to President Bowen I write to you in a spirit of openness and respect so that we might begin a dialogue regarding the needs of the Latina/o community on the Seminary campus as well as throughout the nation. Princeton Seminary has the potential to open many doors for us as well as for other communities of color who have not been allowed a seat at the table. At a meeting held by the Latino students to update the progress of Latinos at the University 20 years after the Report to President Bowen, the students made a statement that applies to us here at the Seminary: "It is not possible in our current historical period as a nation for any university to graduate students who know nothing of Latino politics, culture, religion and history and to claim that they received a good education."

I hope to hear from you soon to begin our dialogue.

Sincerely,

David T. Abalos, '72

**The following is an example of how to build a program around a distinguished professor.**

**The template for faculty hiring and its impact on the curriculum that can transform the educational environment was set by Prof. Sang Hyun Lee who will retire from teaching this June. Prof. Lee came to PTS and set up an enduring legacy for Asian Americans. He served as director of the Seminary's program for Asian American Theology and Ministry. Prof. Lee taught courses on Jonathan Edwards as well as Asia American Theology. In addition PTS established "a biennial lectureship, The Sang Hyun Lee Lecture on Asian American Theology and Ministry in order to preserve space for the Asian American voices of the present, to empower the Asian American ministers and theological scholars of the future...." Inspire Turning 200 Fall 2011/Winter 2012, Volume 16, Number 1.**

**We applaud what PTS did for the Asian American community. As Latina women and Latino men our community can be greatly enhanced when our universities and seminaries recognize the imperative of demographics as a moral and political imperative to empower the fastest growing community of color in the nation. What PTS did for the Asian American community it can also do for us and other communities of color. Surely there are scholars in our communities around whom other ethnic programs can be established. We wish in no way to enter into competition with other communities of color but to form a coalition with them to create a curriculum and faculty, administrators and Board of Trustees that truly reflect the reality of America.**

**Approaching the students and curriculum through the power of stories**

**The cultural stories of our students**

- Patriarchy/matriarchy
- Uncritical loyalty
- Machismo
- Fatalism
- Devotion to Family
- Dedication to work
- Deeply religious

**I want to describe 3 of these cultural stories that profoundly harm Latina/o students.**

In our struggle with authority the story of uncritical loyalty prevents us from being able to create a new kind of education, family, church or politics based on fundamentally more compassionate and just relationships in the service of transformation.

**Looking inside the Story of Uncritical Loyalty**

- the cult of authority always gives deference to those in power
- since all the truth has been spoken by our leaders there can be no dissent or criticism
- a deep fear of change permeates our life
- denial of experimentation
- we blind ourselves to the faults of the authority figure
- we repress our own doubts and intelligence

- we have a compelling need to follow authority
- we are so loyal to those in authority that we end by being disloyal to ourselves
- apologetic about any disagreement
- this story prevents us from being critical and creative
- it breeds a dogmatic approach to all problems
- conserves the image of divine immutability
- oriented towards a golden past
- it supports the maintenance of the status quo
- personal views and opinions are discredited and are made unacceptable
- it promotes a fortress mentality
- its final legitimacy is given to it by “God” as a mysterious sacred source

### **Looking Inside the Archetypal Story of Patriarchy Matriarchy**

Patriarchy simply defined means the systematic domination of women by men.

#### **Characteristics of the Story of Patriarchy:**

- women are seen primarily as producers of children
- their main task is to be housewives
- women are considered the weaker sex
- women are supposed to be sensitive, emotional, soft and gentle
- they carry the honor of the family
- they are not allowed economic autonomy
- subjected to a double moral standard
- this story breaks the spirit of women
- women are forced to become manipulative in order to survive
- violence has been acceptable in most traditional societies in order to keep women in their place

#### **Characteristics of the Story of Matriarchy:**

- Matriarchy is patriarchy with a feminine face.
- a mother says: AYour father is gone. Now I am in charge as both your father and mother.@
- the story has not changed but only the gender
- if it is another form of domination based on gender then it is negative
- a woman practices the story of patriarchy and raises her sons and daughters as if the father was still present or as if she were the father

These archetypal stories are always in the service of possessiveness, power or violence but never in the service of transformation. Neither women nor men can achieve the goal of the journey through the core drama of life, finding their true self. These stories wound both men and women alike and it undermines the next generation.

### **The Stories of US society**

- Capitalism
- The wounded self
- The story of poverty
- Democracy
- Domination of nature
- Individualism
- Mobility
- Tribalism

I want to describe 4 of these stories that we ingest in US society that have also done our Latina/o students great harm

### **The Story of Capitalism**

The official story of U.S. society is the archetypal drama of capitalism. In the democratic liberal society of the US the most powerful authoritarian constraint is the drama of capitalism that is at odds with the story of democracy. Liberal capitalism is inherently flawed because of the following characteristics:

- this story frees everyone to compete with one another without killing each other
- it establishes shared rules of the game
- the story of liberal democracy sets procedures by which to pursue self interest
- it assures us that there is a safety net for those who are intended not to make it
- we are guaranteed certain inalienable rights such as freedom of assembly, speech, religion and press so that commerce or the pursuit of our happiness through unlimited possibilities for acquisition will go unhampered

From the perspective of transformation the most important criticism of liberal capitalism is that it is primarily interested in power and not at all in justice and compassion. The story or drama of capitalism is always in the service of power and/or violence. It arrests our lives on our journey through the core drama of life or leads us into the exit into the abyss. The following are the characteristics of the story of capitalism:

In the public realm

- to survive we are all tempted to become immoral and insincere
- our relationships are dominated by competition
- we cannot afford to be intimate
- we wear masks
- we are always looking over our shoulder lest we be overtaken
- nobody is at home, the self is driven underground
- all that matters is self interest and power
- we settle for less as a partial self, a fragmented self; only a piece of us is present at any one time
- we are all tied to an impersonal system



## **The Most Destructive Story of US Society**

### **Looking Inside the Story of Tribalism**

The archetypal drama of tribalism is always in the service of deformation that exits us from the core drama of our journey into the abyss. In this story a particular group takes a fragment of life such as skin color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation or ability and turns it into a fantasy that dominates the whole of life. The group that possesses this fragment consider themselves to be superior and know only five ways by which to relate to those others:

The outsiders are treated as **invisible**; they do not even exist in the eyes of the inner group, they are treated as if they are nothing.

If the invisible insist on being seen then they must accept their **inferiority**, that is, inferior jobs, housing, education, health care and other necessities.

Because we need to survive and to be accepted, especially the children who look for security, we learn to **assimilate**, to become like the powerful so that we will be allowed into the system; but this comes at a heavy price---the allegedly inferior are required to strip away whatever the powerful consider to be unacceptable such as language, accent, clothing and values; this leads to a form of self hatred and a contempt of one's own people and culture.

**Assimilation is never neutral. It does great violence to our community. Assimilation is:**

- self wounding
- self denial
- self hatred
- amputation
- trauma
- descent into hell
- amnesia which is familial
- cultural
- communal
- ancestral
- a nomadic wandering of homelessness

**Jose, Can You See?** Alberto Sandoval-Sanchez

Once we have been accepted into the inner sanctum, the powerful expect us to live the party line and never to represent our community but rather to be a loyal member of the adopted group; if we begin to speak on behalf of our group we are considered to be disloyal and we will be **exiled**, that is, fired, demoted, transferred, given no bonus and other forms of retaliation.

The worst thing that can be done to us if we are considered to be inferior is that we can be **exterminated** or killed as were the Native Americans and the Mexicans who were considered to be an obstacle to the expansion of slavery, Manifest Destiny and American westward expansion.

The irony of this is that all of us have been the victims at one time or another of the story of tribalism. The English and other Northern Europeans who settled in the East coast of the present U.S. were escaping from religious persecution. But once in the New World they victimized Native American Indians. African people were brought here against their will as slaves as early as 1619. Later the Irish were treated as inferior by the English Protestants but then the Irish turned around and inflicted the story on the Italians. What every group that became successfully assimilated into American society did not know was that they were the carriers of a deadly story that wounded them so that as a result they hurt others in the same way. They went from being victims to becoming victimizers. As a society we have not yet succeeded in emptying ourselves of the story of tribalism. As a result there are those in our society who continue to exit themselves and others from the core drama into the abyss in the service of deformation.

### **Looking inside the Story of the Wounded Self**

While we are caught in the stories of capitalism and possessive love we cannot heal ourselves and we remain fragmented, partial selves arrested on the journey of life. Because in the story of capitalism we hide from others and ourselves and continue to avoid who we are in the compensating story of possessive/romantic love we cannot deal with the pain that we are experiencing in another aspect of our lives, the story of the wounded self that has opened up the abyss for us in Act II, Scene 2. Almost all of us have experienced one or several of the following traumas:

- physical or psychological abuse
- sexual abuse
- alcohol abuse
- drug abuse
- desertion due to death, divorce or abandonment
- eating disorders

We cannot afford to reveal these wounds because we are caught up in the struggle for power and in the story of possessive love we have projected a false image of our self and receive a false image of the other in return. Our greatest fear is that the other will discover who we are behind the mask.

### **The Story of Poverty**

While Latina/o students are assaulted by the stories of tribalism capitalism, the wounded self and those cultural stories of their own heritage that are destructive there is another story of which we need to be aware: the story of poverty. Poverty is not just a word or an abstraction, poverty is never alone; it is a daily experience of life

Let us look inside this story and examine its characteristics:

- Depression
- Emotional turmoil
- Anger
- Depression
- Frustration
- Desperation
- Crime ridden neighborhoods
- Inadequate schools

- Not enough money
- Poor housing
- Little or no health insurance
- Poor nutrition
- Few clothes

Let us listen to Neil Foley the author of **The White Scourge Mexicans, Blacks and Poor Whites in Texas in Texas Cotton Culture.**

In some towns, for example, Mexicans could attend Anglo schools if they were “clean” which often was a euphemism for white as well as an allusion to the eugenic maintenance of “white racial hygiene”. A farmer from Nueces County remarked: “I would not mind Jim Crowing the filthy Mexicans, but I would not Jim Crow a Mexican if he was educated and...nearer the white race.” E.E. Davis wrote that “The American children and the clean high-minded Mexican children do not want to go to school with the dirty “greaser” type of Mexican child.” (p. 41)

Zaragosa Vargas in his book, **Labor Rights Are Civil Rights Mexican American Workers in Twentieth Century America** wrote:

In the 1930s “Poverty was exacerbated by illiteracy, a damning indictment of Anglo racism. Illiteracy was caused by poor school attendance, because economic necessity forced cash-starved parents to put their children to work in the fields. Also, many parents did not have birth certificates for their children. They could not afford to buy books and other school supplies, and most migrant children were poorly clothed and lacked shoes. Parents chose to keep them out of school rather than endure insults from hostile teachers and heckling and teasing by classmates. Ill health attributed to malnutrition and harsh physical work was also a contributing factor in low school attendance. ...illiteracy was greatest among Tejanos. More than a third had never attended school, in contrast with 10 percent of the state’s blacks.; 40 percent dropped out before the third grade; and just five percent of Tejanos had gone beyond the fourth grade, in comparison to 14 percent of blacks and 90 percent of Anglos. (pp. 23-4)

**The Stories of the Wounded Self and Poverty give rise to and feed the following destructive stories:**

- Stereotyping
- Marginalization
- Internalized oppression

**The Story of Stereotyping**

- Distance between people
- Power
- Domination
- Justification for violence
- Buffer
- Demonization
- Abstraction
- Caricature
- Disconnection
- Fear of difference

- Exclusion
- Denial of responsibility
- Objectification
- Otherness
- Projection
- Cancellation
- Oppression
- Tribalism
- Scapegoat
- Demeaning
- Profiling
- Definition
- Simplification
- Extreme violence

For example to call a young boy or girl, man or woman from a Mexican American background “a dirty Mexican” enabled an entire complex of prejudicial fantasies to attain the certification of the alleged superiority of the aggressor.

Poor hygiene  
 Dark skin  
 Farm labor  
 Poverty  
 Dilapidated living conditions  
 Inferiority

Stereotyping is essentially a simplified mental picture of an individual or group of people who have certain characteristic qualities. It is used negatively but many wrongly feel it can be dissolved by education or familiarization. It predicts behavior based on race, class, gender, religion, age, national origin. The word stereotype comes from printing a duplicate that can be repeatedly reproduced as an original typographical element used for printing instead of the original. Set of ideas repeated over time with no change.

### **The Story of Marginalization**

Marginalization is a deliberate strategy by the dominant of rendering a whole group of people as being socially, politically, economically, culturally, racially, ethnically and psychologically inferior.

### **Characteristics of the story**

- De-politicizes those on the fringes
- Defined as lesser beings by the powerful at the center
- Disenfranchises the most vulnerable
- Deprived of the basics of life
- Powerlessness
- Excluded from education
- Apartheid isolation

- Permanent victimization
- Internalized oppression
- Uselessness
- Inadequacy
- Maintained by violence
- Legitimized use of force both physical and psychological

The stories of stereotyping and tribalism collude with the dramas of marginalization and internalized oppression.

### **The Story and Politics of Internalized Oppression**

#### **Looking inside this story**

- A person agrees with the powerful other that he or she is not as good as they are
- They have been raised to see themselves as inferior by the wider society
- “No sirvo para nada”, I am useless, is a phrase often heard
- We see ourselves only from the perspective of the other
- We deserve what is done to us
- I want to be one of the “better ones” by proving myself to the powerful
- Our poverty is our own fault for not being more aggressive in the contest for power
- We make excuses for our own sense of powerlessness
- We are fated to fail: “Asi es la vida. Que se va hacer”
- We are filled with self loathing and hate our culture
- We are embarrassed by our Spanish speaking parents
- Our poor jobs, living conditions, inadequate housing and bad education together with depressing drop out rates from school are proof to the Anglos that we cannot make it
- Worst of all many believe that our conditions are the result of “God’s” will
- Many believe the lies and accept them as their fate

This story is a story in the larger context of the stories of tribalism, the politics of marginalization, stereotyping and the wounded self and is always in the service of deformation that exits us from the core drama of life. These stories intertwine and strengthen one another through violence.

**Creating the Alternative: we need to free ourselves of the stories of uncritical loyalty, patriarchy/matriarchy, tribalism, capitalism, poverty, the wounded self, stereotyping, marginalization and internalized oppression**

#### **The Stories of the Guide, Transforming friendship and Intimacy**

I do not wish to leave us depressed. There are alternative stories that redeem our lives. In order to delve deeply into our own self we need the stories of transforming love in friendship, the guide and the gift of the story of intimacy, the ability to be close to our self, to love our personhood as another face of the deepest sacred source. This kind of self love and intimacy opens us to see the value and the beauty of the other as a self because we cannot love others unless we embrace our own life with love.

## **The Story of the Guide in the Service of Transformation**

### **Looking Inside the Story of the True Guide**

- they reach out towards us to help us test whether or not the story we are practicing is in fact fundamentally new and better
- they initially ask us to risk trust in them
- always guide us back to our deeper self so that we can experience in our wholeness the personal, political, historical and sacred faces of our being
- they put themselves out of business by knowing when to let go in regards to the specific problem being confronted
- as wounded healers they acknowledge their own confusion, they are not all-knowing
- they are not the source of truth but rather point us to the deepest source of transformation
- they never demand that we journey through the core drama of life as a replica of their own story
- we become mutual guides on the journey through the core drama of life
- help to create a community of guides

Guides of transformation can be a friend, a lover, a parent, a teacher, a coach, a brother or sister, a grandmother who has passed, our own inner voice or anybody who gives us the gift of listening and who inspires in us trust so that we can tell our story, especially those aspects of our self of which we are most afraid; the ultimate guide is the deepest source of transformation who travels with us through the core drama of life again and again

### **The Teacher as Guide: the Stories of Transforming Friendship and Intimacy**

#### **The Story of Transforming Love in Friendship**

- In the story of transforming friendship we meet a real person, our own self and the self of the other, not a projected fantasy
- We are deeply moved by someone and we ask questions: What is this relationship doing to me? What is it doing to you? What is it doing to us?
- I want to grow in myself what attracted me to you and what I admire about you
- the relationship frees you and me to be fully our own unique self
- we trust each other and take the risk to tell our story and by so doing we heal each other
- we become guides to each other through the journey of the core drama of life
- this story opens us up to the world, it politicizes us
- when we go on our distinct journeys the relationship changes but what each of us found was our own self through each other

The proof that this is the story of transforming friendship is that we can enact many different concrete expressions of new and more compassionate stories and relationships in order to deal with continuity and change, collaboration and conflict so that we can achieve justice and experience the four faces of our being the personal, political, historical and sacred in their wholeness.

## **Looking inside the politics of the story of intimacy**

### **Characteristics of the politics and story of intimacy:**

- intimacy: is a deep attachment to one=s inner sources
- it is the acceptance of one=s own ideas, feelings and thoughts
- it is a radical awareness, a profound sense of being close, of being connected to one=s self, to others and to the deepest source of our being
- overcomes the fear of being vulnerable to others
- intimacy allows us to tell our story to another
- allows us to know that this person will never hurt me
- frees us to express our emotions
- it is the attainment of a sense of peace
- the achievement of wholeness
- intimacy means not even having to speak to communicate
- intimacy is about tenderness that frees everyone to be who they are
- “I feel so good about myself when I am in your presence”, a declaration of intimacy
- honesty, trust, faithfulness, authenticity, imagination, completeness, creativity and emergence are all connected to intimacy
- love, compassion and a thirst for justice are all aspects of intimacy
- true intimacy allows us to practice creative isolation since we give to each other both internal and external space—a room of one’s own to reflect
- through intimacy we rediscover the body, nature, emotions, feelings, the feminine/masculine and fiesta as a search for community
- kinship: a sense of connectedness and of sharing a common suffering; it represents the emergence from solitude and subjection
- struggle together: we reach out to others with the personal, political, historical and sacred faces of our being in order to create a fundamentally more loving and just society

### **Transforming the Latina/o and Anglo Culture**

#### **Politics of the Home, the Culture and the Wider Society**

Subverting traditional values in the service of transformation by reorienting them, reinterpreting, rediscovering, recreating and reinventing them

- cariño: affection by which we affirm the value and sacredness of each other
- respeto: for a person as a person not because of power, privilege, status or prestige
- verguenza: shame only when I hurt another human being
- pecado: the only sin is to lose the self and to prevent others from going on their journey to find the self
- familia: creating a nurturing context for each member; preparing them to leave
- remordimiento: cancel the guilt and change your life
- machismo: the use of masculine energy to confront injustice in the community
- compadrazgo: godparents as guides through the core drama of life
- la Virgen: symbol of liberation, of wholeness, selfhood; to become pregnant again and again with our new self
- fiesta: celebrate the community, life, colors, food, music, dance, sensuality, emotion, participation is democratic

- intimacy: closeness to one's own self and others that destroys stereotypes
- ¡Ay, Dios mio!: only the god of transformation invites us and needs us to finish creation
- amistad: friendship and openness to all; no tribalism
- padre: no patriarchy, a guide through the core drama of life
- madre: no matriarchy, a guide through the core drama of life
- la Raza: the community of those who care deeply about justice and compassion
- pasión: for everything that you do
- actitud: disposition, orientation of openness and readiness to face new kinds of problems

### **Critiquing both cultures**

- No more victims or victimizers
- We need to learn to be an Insider/outsider
- In the system but not of the system
- In the story but not of the story
- Reject archetypal ways of life and stories from both cultures that block our journey on the core drama of life
- Cease being in emanation to the story of capitalism and power as a way of life in favor of America at its best, the story of democracy
- It is a moral and political crime to prevent people on the basis of race, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, religion, gender or national origin from journeying through the core drama of life

### **America at Its Best: The Story of Democracy**

#### **The Story of Democracy in the Service of Transformation**

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing all of us is to work aggressively in order to bring about the story of democracy in its fullness for all of our citizens. At the present time we are practicing a limited fragment of the story of democracy. Al Farabi in the 10th Century in Damascus said that democracy is the best opportunity for people to gain enough freedom and opportunity to move toward transformation. But we need to go beyond Al Farabi's understanding of democracy. He believed that the common man and woman could not understand democracy or how to practice transformation. But we know that we have the freedom of the very nature of our being human to participate in transformation. With this great freedom we can re-define politics to be that which we can and need to do together to achieve love and justice. Each of us of the very nature of our humanity is political; each of us together with the personal, historical and sacred faces of our being has a political face of our being. Each of us can participate in all aspects of our lives in creating a compassionate and just environment for all people.

The following characteristics describe how in actual practice we live the story of democracy.

- each person is valuable
- each of us needs to participate
- we are free to break unbearable relationships
- we can practice the four faces of our being in their wholeness
- the power of the people rests upon the capacity to consciously, critically and creatively respond to the deepest ground of our being
- democracy recognizes an equality of needs and opportunities



- the story of democracy makes possible the formation of communities that act with justice and compassion
- the story of democracy substitutes community for the state and self interested power for full human capacity for each member of the community
- democracy creates an environment that enables each of us to travel through the core drama of life at least once in our life so that we free ourselves to help others overcome poverty, injustice and exploitation
- both the sacred and we are transformed by enacting true democracy
- the power of the people is to enter into dialogue with our self, with others, and with the deepest sacred source of transformation in order to confront problems
- none of us is complete until each of us is free to participate with the deepest sacred source of transformation so that we can co-create responses to injustice
- democracy of its very essence is non-violent cf. Cesar Chavez and Martin Luther King, Jr.
- there are four criteria for determining if a society is based on democratic principles\*
  - the dignity of the individual must be paramount
  - collectively made law
  - law that is equally enforced
  - equality from birth\*

\*In regards to these four criteria see the brilliant book by Katherine Irene Pettus, **Felony Disenfranchisement in America Historical Origins, Institutional Racism and Modern Consequences** New York, Scholarly Publishing, 2005 and a paper, "Dishonored Strangers", delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, Georgia, 2001.