

Chongivity Activity

Latinx Hyperfemininity as Iconography, Performance, and Praxis of Belonging

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Loud, assertive, and stylistically spectacular. The working-class figure of the *chonga* embodied by young Latina women in Miami inspires both admiration and denigration among her fellow residents. Her no-nonsense attitude commands respect, but her fashion sense, marked by large gold hoop earrings, tight spandex outfits, and dramatic makeup, is often mocked as excessive. The *chonga's* comportment and sexual body presentation are read as gender nonconforming, and her performances of ethnicity (heavily accented Spanglish, stylistic citations of Blackness, indifference to assimilating into whiteness) as aberrant. Above all other characterizations, the *chonga* is defined by her hyperfemme aesthetics, as famously depicted by the Latina creators of the viral “Chongalicious” YouTube video of 2007, Mimi Davila and Laura Di Lorenzo, who at the time were theatre students in an arts magnet high school in Miami. In it, they parody the *chonga's* style by using stick glue for hair gel and Sharpie pens for lip liner. Despite the numerous ways that *chongas* are policed for their transgressions of gender, ethnic performance, and fashion, their bodies nevertheless signal ethnic belonging and are sometimes celebrated among residents for how they mark Miami as a site of undisciplined performances of Latinidad. The city, like *chongas*, is also perceived in the wider US imaginary as aesthetically, ethnically, and sexually over the top.

While young women like *chongas* and *cholas*, their West Coast counterparts, are perceived as having antagonistic relationships with other women through infighting, as represented in popular culture through works such as the film *Mi Vida Loca* (1993) and the “Chongalicious” video, these tropes occlude how Latinx have activated working-class Latina hyperfemininities as a relational practice. The forms of relation I center on in this essay would be called *chongivity activity* by Latinx in Miami, who use the term when observing the collaborative trouble-making behaviors of *chongas*. Chongivity activity describes the shameless and often gender-nonconforming actions that *chongas* and other rebel Latinx engage in together. These activities can range from public disturbances such as tagging a public wall or dancing on a pool table at a bar, to creating cultural work such as art and YouTube videos. It often entails practices of makeup and dress

undertaken with the help of one's homegirls, and it is this aspect that my commentary will center on.

I use chongivity activity as a framework for analyzing how a range of women and queer Latinx cultural producers use makeup and other forms of working-class, feminized, and criminalized forms of aesthetic labor to sustain relations with each other. Consideration of these practices provides a critical understanding of how women and queer Latinx exchange *through* hyperfemininity to collaboratively execute projects that push back against gendered and racialized sociocultural exclusions and create alternative spaces and representations. These activities tend to agitate norms of racialized gender within and outside of Latinx communities. Additionally, chongivity activity performs an organic archiving of feminized cultural practices that would otherwise face erasure, as they are not perceived as meriting historical value by dominant US nationalist narratives and masculinized tropes of Latinx resistance, as femme aesthetic body practices are often viewed as apolitical and unproductive wastes of time and money.

My analysis and theorizing are inspired by the unique styles and gender performances of Miami *chongas* but extends the meaning of the colloquial phrase “chongivity activity” to encompass a range of artistic and vernacular practices engaged by Latinx situated in various geographic locations within the United States. These artists and cultural workers have disparate gender, ethnic, and (trans)national identifications. I do not intend to subsume important historical and social particularities as it relates to these vectors of difference but rather work to name shared aesthetic and relational affinities across Latinidades in time and space. Beyond showing how chongivity activity brings women and queer Latinx together, I will also show how it challenges mainstream white feminist and homonormative politics through place-making.¹

Tracing the Activity

Plotting the beauty marks of chongivity activity, I gather an archive comprised of various scenes—historical moments and projects that trace the circuits of Latinx aesthetic relationality across time and geographies. Studying this archive involves various affective registers, ranging from giddy, slapstick humor to righteous anger, and the feelings of mutual care shared between friends and community members, particularly those that cross generational divides. The embodied aesthetics of chongivity activity both reflect and give rise to these affects, moving through interiority and surface as they manifest in enfolded feelings. As Latina femmes line their eyes and lips, they stir up feelings of strength, sexuality, and social rebellion while simultaneously expressing them (Mahmood 2011). Chongivity activity results in what Chicana studies scholar Marie “Keta” Miranda terms “the publicization of the private,” (2003, 5) in her study of Chicana girl gang members in Oakland, California, where intimacies

between the girls shape the social landscape. Chongivity activity makes intra-Latinx recognition, affection, and place-making possible. Yet, because its unruly affects and flashy aesthetics are viewed as disreputable, it also impedes socialities that are forged through respectability politics, heteronormativity, and white-identification/aspiration.

I provide textual snapshots of these aesthetic relations accompanied by visual illustrations to serve as documentation culled from my visual analysis, research, and interviews with artists and cultural producers as I have traversed living Latinidad on the East and West coasts of the United States. I begin by examining how Chicana artists in the 1970s such as Judith F. Baca and Yolanda M. López engaged in chongivity activity to connect with young Chicana women in the sphere of visual art making. Baca and López's projects provide a context for more recent iterations of chongivity activity. In this archive I include the performances of self-described *chonga* drag queens Juliesy Inbed and Karla Croqueta, which resulted in the creation of Counter Corner, a monthly queer party in Miami, Florida. Counter Corner has become a significant site of sociality for queer and trans people of color in the city. By bringing these provocateurs of chongivity activity into conversation, I aim to forge radical genealogies of Latinx relation that are based on the transformative potential of cultural practices rooted in femme and queer, or *queerly femme*, practices of the body.

Chola Vanity Disrupts the Woman's Building

In 1976, artist Judith F. Baca, known for her politically radical, large-scale, community-based mural work in Southern California, was part of a collective that organized the first exhibition dedicated to showcasing Chicana art in the United States. The exhibition, titled *Las Chicanas: Las Venas de la Mujer*, was presented at the feminist art space the Woman's Building in Los Angeles. The idea for the project was prompted by the relocation of the Woman's Building to Lincoln Heights, LA, a poor and working-class immigrant enclave with a large Chicana population. In response to the social particularities of their new site, the founders of the Woman's Building wrote a grant to support Latinas organizing their own exhibition centering on experiences of work (Indych-López 2018, 94).

While some artists in the exhibition addressed issues such as Latina sweatshop labor, Baca's project in the exhibition centered on the more intimate, yet no less public, work of Chicana self-fashioning, particularly through makeup. Baca presented *Las Tres Marias* (1976), a multimedia project that included installation, sculpture, and performance. In the performance titled *Vanity Table*, Baca transformed herself into a 1940s *pachuca*, the highly stylized, zoot-suit-wearing Chicana street girl, by applying makeup and styling her hair at a vanity table. The project also included the critically acclaimed sculpture *Las Tres Marias*, a nearly life-size triptych in which two drawings of Chicana women flank a mirror. One



Figure 33.1. Judith F. Baca as La Pachuca, 1974. Photographed by Donna Deitch and used with permission from SPARC.

side depicts the artist in the dress of a 1940s *pachuca* with teased hair, severely lined eyes and brows, and long nails. The panel on the opposite side depicts a young Chicana in the less feminized but nonetheless stylized dress of 1970s *cholas* that incorporated menswear. Baca has described how the title refers to the three dominant tropes of femininity available to Chicanas: the whore, the mother, and the virgin. The mirror in the center of the sculpture serves as a third space for Chicana women to reimagine themselves within this representational matrix.

While the gender politics of *Las Tres Marias* has been expertly addressed elsewhere (Gaspar de Alba 1998; Indych-López 2018; Ramírez 2009), here I am interested in the ghostly presence and chongivity activity of Baca's often-unacknowledged collaborators in the project. Namely, the Chicana girl gang members from Baca's neighborhood of Pacoima, California, who called themselves the Tiny Locas. Baca recruited the girls to work with her in painting a backdrop for the *Vanity Table* makeup performance. On the wall against which Baca's vanity table prop was set, the girls painted a large heart, akin to the Catholic iconography of the sacred heart, and emblazoned the center of it with "Mi Varrio Pacoima" with black spray paint in large graffiti script. The thick, tentacle-like veins that protruded from the heart were scrawled with the girls' varying individual tags. Save for a few nickname tags like "Smiley" and "Chula," much of the text is indecipherable, demonstrating the skill and practice of *chola* demarcation and delineation that literature scholar Mónica Huerta has theorized as gendered expressions of control (2018, 112). It is clear that this is their semiotic terrain.

In her monograph on Baca's oeuvre, art historian Anna Indych-López describes how the artist often recruited young women gang members to work on



Figure 33.2. Judith F. Baca standing in front of the installation of *Vanity Table* at the Woman's Building. September 1976. Copyright Judith F. Baca.

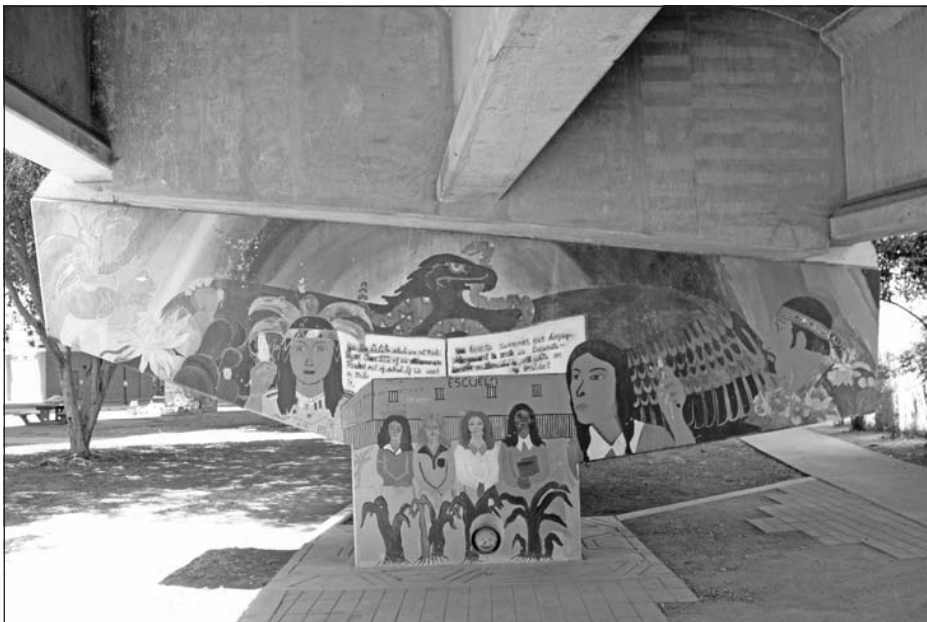
her mural projects, but *Las Tres Marias* entailed a different process. “Here, rather than work with gang youth in the streets, she brought the street to a gallery space at a moment when graffiti still signaled class warfare and was not yet accepted by the art establishment. Yet the gesture transgressed more than just the boundaries of high and low art. Although their participation in the Woman’s Building was fleeting—perhaps intentionally so, to mirror real-life experiences—the presence of the Tiny Locas disrupted the cultural, class, and racial boundaries of the white feminist movement (the point of the show), even as Baca herself was grappling with these blurred and fluid boundaries (2018, 96).”

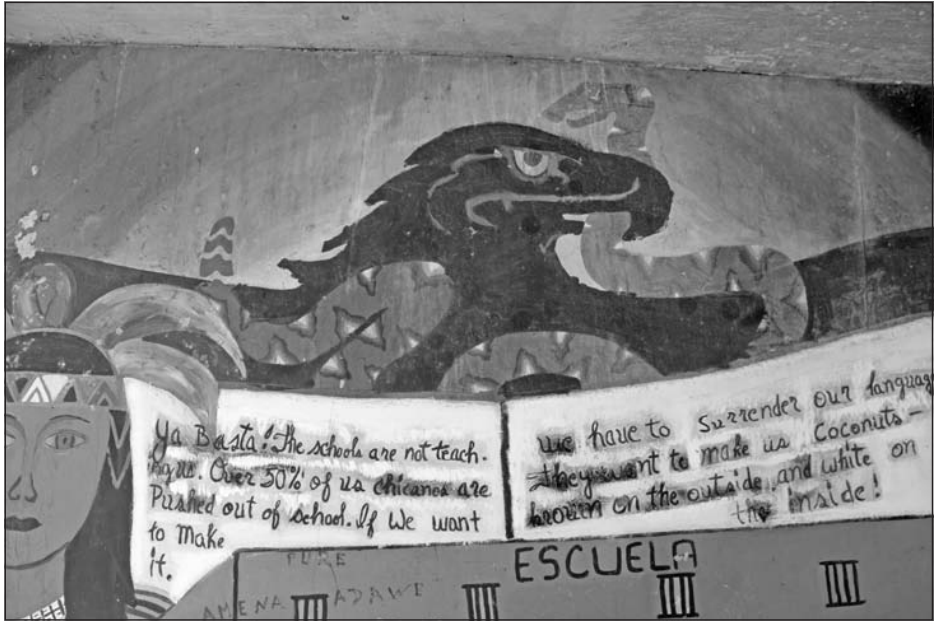
Photo documentation of *Vanity Table* in existing publications show the painting in Baca’s Woman’s Building installation, but the Tiny Locas are absent. Baca appears in these images, but tentatively, often looking elsewhere. She often emerges from the edges of the frame, consumed with thought or in the midst of working. Given the limits of the documentation, the tags on the wall stand in for the Tiny Locas’ bodies, generating a haunting presence in the archive. As a result, Baca’s *Vanity Table* makeup performance as a *pachuca*, the *chola*/Tiny Loca’s predecessor, could be read as a palimpsest, an incarnation of the Tiny Locas’ absent presence through incorporation.

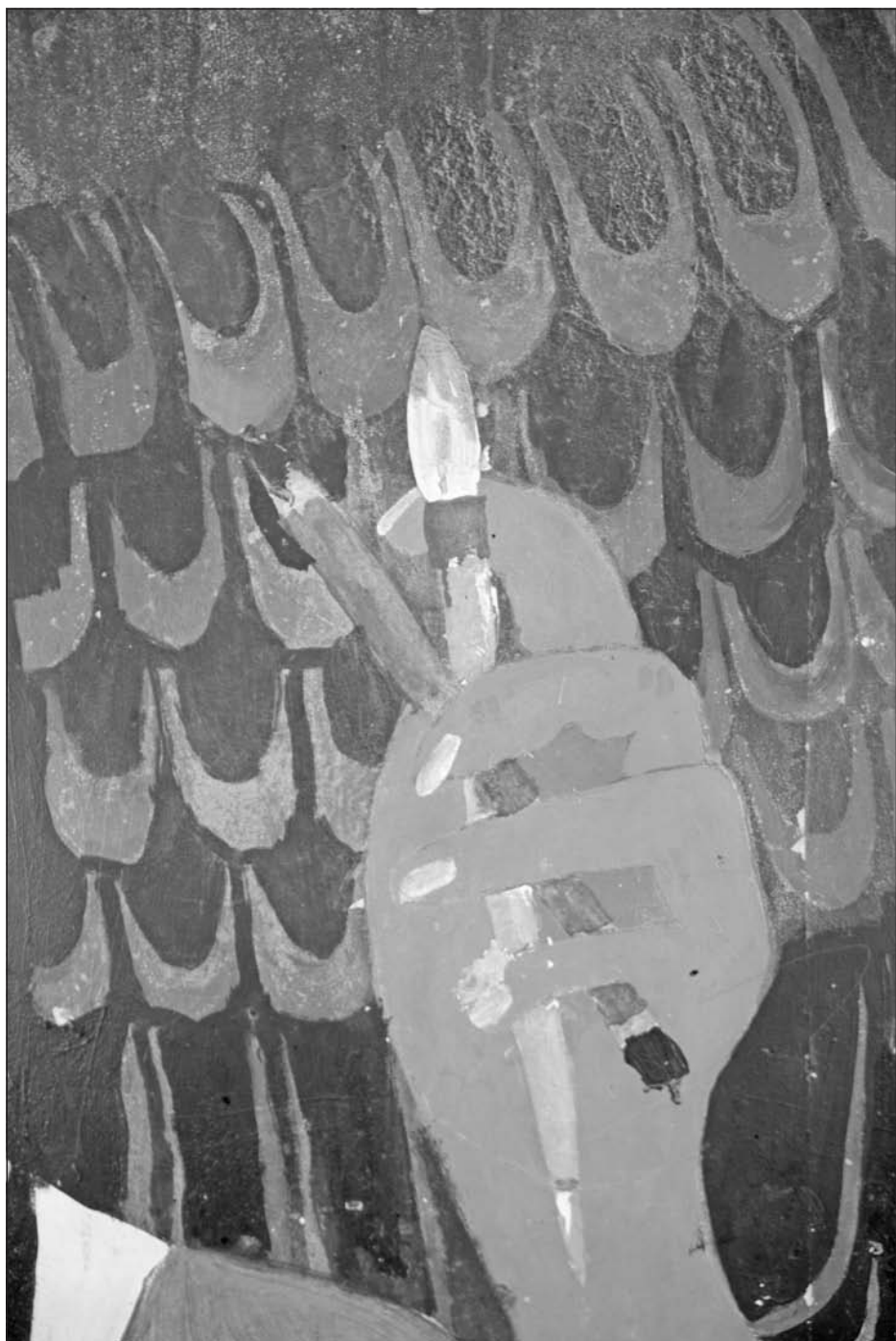
In the *Las Tres Marias* project Baca put chongivity activity to work, not only in inviting the Tiny Locas to occupy the space but in then extending their aesthetic labor to the *Vanity Table* performance, where her *pachuca* transformation embodied a similarly undisciplined Chicana femininity. Latinx cultural studies scholar Leticia Alvarado has described this performance of gender as that of the *malflora*, the bad flower that is perceived as lesbian and gender nonconforming. Alvarado notes that the *malflora*, like the *chola*, *chonga*, and *pachuca*, is “oppositional, but also connective, reaching out with intimate touch and direct gazes that challenge normative stereotypes, but also suggest queer connectivity” (2017, 101). A reading alert to the power of chongivity activity would suggest that Baca was *led by* her relations with the Tiny Locas and their connections with each other, as fomented by aesthetic work, to examine her own positionality within the complex terrain of Chicana gendered embodiment and subjectivity. This dynamic is echoed in artist Yolanda M. López’s work with the *Mujeres Muralistas de San Diego*.

Makeup as Creative Calling

Faced with increasing displacement due to urban development in San Diego in the 1960s, residents of Barrio Logan, the oldest Chicana neighborhood in the city that is located near the US–Mexico border, occupied and claimed the area under the construction of the I-5 freeway. The freeway project demolished homes and disintegrated the neighborhood, forcing the removal of many residents. In







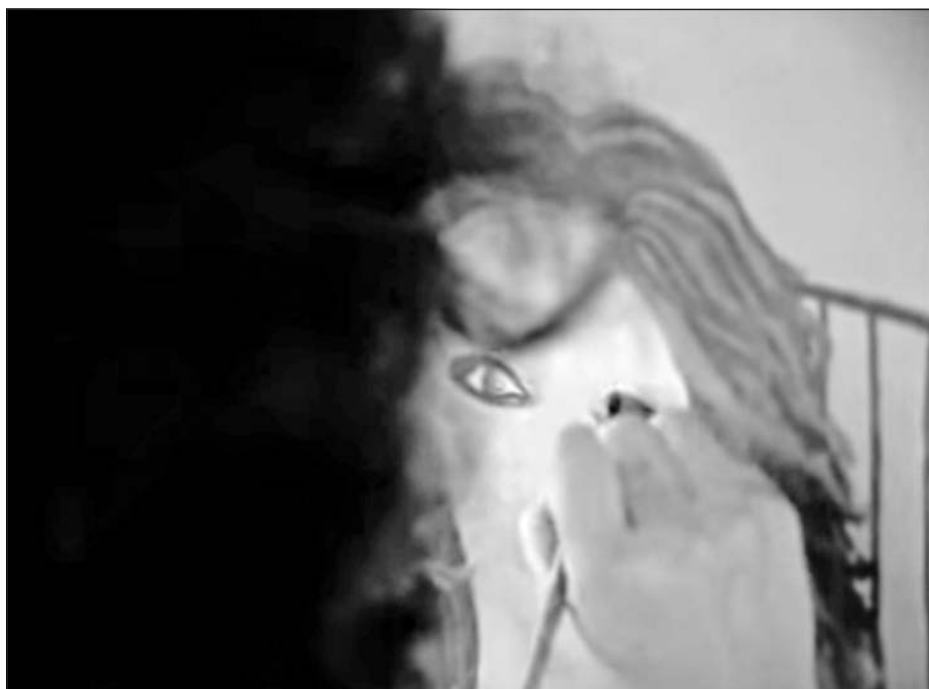


Figures 33.3, 33.4, 33.5, 33.6, and 33.7. *Chicanas/Escuelas* Mural at Chicano Park by Mujeres Muralistas de San Diego (Julietta A. García-Torres, Cecilia de la Torre, and Eva C. Craig) with Yolanda López. Photographed and copyright by Katherine Steelman and Jillian Hernández.

response, community members demanded that the areas below the freeway be used as a public space. Direct action began on April 22, 1970, with activists forming a human chain around bulldozers, and the land was formally designated as Chicano Park by government authorities in 1971. In 1973, local artists seized on the massive highway structure as a monumental surface upon which to inscribe Chicana/Mexicana histories and manifestos of resistance.

The Chicano Park mural project was spearheaded by Chicana men and marginalized women's contributions (Lovell 2018). Artist Yolanda M. López, known for the feminist reimaginings of La Virgen de Guadalupe she fashioned in the 1970s, was from Barrio Logan and assisted with early mural efforts. She has discussed how she was never invited to contribute her own mural by the men leading the project, and due to the palpable gender dynamics she did not press the issue (Mulford 1989). Yet she was approached by a group of local high school girls who wanted to paint a mural there. In the documentary *Chicano Park* (Mulford 1989), López states, "The idea of working with young women was really thrilling to me so I said, 'Ok, we'll do it! Our enthusiasm for each other was really contagious'" (ibid). The mural was titled *Chicanas/Escuelas* and was completed in 1978 by López and the high school students, who named themselves Mujeres Muralistas de San Diego (Julietta A. García-Torres, Cecilia de la Torre, and Eva C. Craig).





Figures 33.8, 33.9, 33.10, and 33.11. Stills from *Chicano Park* documentary featuring the Mujeres Muralistas de San Diego.

Their mural depicts a scene that traverses past and present. The horizontal diaphragm of the freeway structure is framed with a depiction of a large black eagle in Aztec style. The eagle has a snake in its mouth and is set against a vibrant rainbow in the background. A portrait of an ancient Mayan in profile is pictured on the extreme left of the structure, and a contemporary Chicano, which the muralists described as a cholo (Mulford 1989), bookends the mural on the extreme right. The two figures face each other. An Aztec girl displaying an ear of corn appears in the left-center of the composition and is paired with a young contemporary Chicana on the right. The Chicana wears red lipstick, has long fingernails, and displays a pencil and paintbrush in her hand, marking her as a student, artist, and high femme.² The column supporting the diaphragm depicts four young women in close proximity to each other, defiantly sprouting from stalks of corn against the dystopic backdrop of a school building that resembles a prison. Their made-up faces and otherworldly blue and purple skin tones contrast with the state architecture, declaring undisciplined femininity and radical difference in the face of displacement and discipline.

Above the grouping of girl students, the eagle displays an open book that is inscribed with cursive lettering that reads, “Ya basta! [Enough!] The schools are not teaching us. Over 50 percent of us Chicanos are pushed out of school. If we want to make it, we have to surrender our language. They want to make us coconuts—brown on the outside and white on the inside!” Like the bold lettering and semiotic markings that the Tiny Locas made at Judith Baca’s *Vanity Table* installation, the text by the Mujeres Muralistas de San Diego amplifies the imagery, with the exclamation marks and bold, direct phrasing conveying the rousing affect of homegirl truth telling.

Beyond the relational praxis of López serving as what she describes as a “facilitator and teacher” to the girls, I am compelled by how the girls’ vision for their mural was sparked by the Latina femme body practice of makeup. In describing the inspiration for the mural in the *Chicano Park* documentary (Mulford 1989), one of the girls stated that she arrived at the idea by observing how the students at her high school dressed, specifically how the girls “se transformavan pintando sus caras” (“would transform their faces with makeup”). In other words, the girls felt compelled to document their peers’ chongivity activity and used the mural to extend the activity to disrupt the masculinist iconography of many of the murals in Chicano Park, which feature social realist depictions of figures such as Emiliano Zapata and Che Guevara. In addition to wanting to portray Chicana girls of her own generation, the student also discusses a desire to depict Chicana women ancestors “como no usaba, no makeup antes” (“the way they didn’t use makeup before”). Here, makeup serves as a temporal marker between past and present embodiments of feminine Indigeneity, Mexicanidad and Chicanidad, yet without hierarchies of valuation. In the Chicana student artist’s view, makeup and its absence indicate generational difference, not gendered/ethnic deviance or (in)authenticity.

The documentary footage of the girls talking about and working on their mural is striking, for it captures the dramatic *chola* makeup they wore themselves. In much of the footage that depicts them working, they are shown painting thick eyeliner on the faces of the young women students they depict in the mural. By engaging in chongivity activity, young Chicana women inspired by each other's makeup enlisted Yolanda López to work with them in executing a visionary critique and representation of gendered survivance and belonging in a contested site.³ Next we consider the more recent, makeup-fueled relationalities engendered by *chonga* drag performers in Miami, Florida.

The Place-Making Potential of *Chonga* Drag

Drag performers Juliesy Inbed and Karla Croqueta have an established following in Miami. Their signature aesthetic of tight spandex clothing and garish makeup, coupled with gaudy jewelry and their thick dark beards, have made them the unlikely darlings of the Miami nightlife scene. They are often booked to host various parties in the city in both queer and straight venues, to which they bring their raucous, *chongalicious* sense of humor in engaging participants. The way Giovanni Profera (Juliesy) and Josué García (Karla) came together to become Juliesy and Karla, and the effects it has had on Miami's queer social landscape, embody the connective and place-making potential of chongivity activity.

Profera and Garcia are two queer men who were longtime neighborhood friends. They grew up together in the working-class Cuban American enclave of Hialeah in Miami. In my individual interviews with the performers⁴, they described how they came about their chongivity activity as many *chongas* do—in response to being broke. One night they wanted to go out partying but did not have money to buy drinks, so they decided to crash a lesbian ladies' night by donning drag. Gathering their outfits on the fly, Garcia wore a rain poncho with a sequined tube top worn as crop top, paired with what he describes as a "Tina Turner wig." Profera wore a tube top paired with his underwear, adding, "It took three hours to put on our makeup, we looked horrible. It was so bad. The precision wasn't right, we didn't know what the fuck we were doing." Despite being kicked out of the bar for dancing on the pool table, Garcia giddily recalls that Profera looked at him and said, "I look like such a chonga, I feel like a chonga. Did you feel that? That was amazing." The lingering high of their chongivity activity led them to repeat their performance as Juliesy and Karla that same week at the gay Latinx night club Azúcar in Miami, where they performed a rendition of Destiny's Child's song "Say My Name" during Drag Wars night.⁵ They recount that no one clapped, and they were ridiculed for what was perceived as a failed drag performance. Juliesy and Karla's bearded *chonga*-drag aesthetic dramatically departs from the more conventional modes of drag popular in the Miami nightlife scene, which aim for glamour, feminine realness, and celebrity



Figure 33.12. Drag performers Juliesy InBed and Karla Croqueta. Photographed by Daniella A. Rascón. Permission to use from Daniella A. Rascón.

impersonation. This is an aesthetic that Juliesy and Karla’s working-class and ethnic penchant for discount fashion store spandex getups and *chonga* makeup markedly departs from. Though they felt discouraged by this initial rejection in the gay nightclub scene, they nevertheless decided to take their *chonga* performance to the streets when prompted by mutual friend Will González, an amateur filmmaker who wanted to feature them in a series of videos.

The resulting YouTube videos, titled “Hialeah’s Finest,” feature Juliesy and Karla engaging in various forms of chongivity activity. In “Episode One”⁶ they cause a commotion by getting into a mock argument with each other at a bus stop in Hialeah during rush hour traffic. Profera recalls, “People honked. ‘Perra!’ [Bitch] ‘Sucia!’ [Dirty whore] The best one was ‘Traga leche!’ [Cum swallower].” While some passersby joked along with them in good humor, these loaded sexist and homophobic epithets revealed how their performance also agitated respectable conventions of Latinx gender and sexuality through their queerly hyper-feminine *suciedad* (dirtiness). Latinx cultural studies scholar Deborah Vargas describes *suciedad* as a “trope for feminine-gendered subjectivities associated with seedy working-class Latino spaces including queer femmes, nonnormative working and underclass women of color, and travesty and transgender Latinas”

(2014, 717). The *sucia's* gender nonconformity is read through tropes of contamination, they are subjects to be sanitized and/or expelled from the social.

The “Hialeah’s Finest: Episode One” video was shot in close proximity to Profera and Garcia’s neighborhood, which made them vulnerable to being seen by family members. The video captures Profera receiving an angry phone call from his mother while he and Garcia flirt with men in the Westland Mall parking lot as Juliesy and Karla. Garcia shared, “Gio gets a call from his mom. ‘Your son is on 49th street dressed like a hooker and he’s with a fat hooker!’” Minutes later, Profera’s mother appears in the parking lot shouting at the performers from her red Jeep, yelling “Ustedes son machos!” (“You are men!”). This unscripted scene reveals the multilayered forms that the policing of *suciedad* takes, from street harassment to family disapproval, all of which Profera and Garcia appear to take in stride. In fact, they draw energy from these agitated responses (García Hernández 2017) and use them to extend their comedic performances further.

Juliesy and Karla’s improvised enactments and guerilla documentations of *chonga* identity inspire both laughter and disgust. Though they take up the oppositional practice of *chonga* femininity, their practice is not invested in presenting a restorative representation. Like the viral cholafied.com Tumblr page that features celebrity faces like Jay Z transformed into cholas through digital makeovers, Juliesy and Karla’s drag performances signal a “barbed affection” for *chongas* and “seeks an aesthetic posture besides denigration, without the explicit hopes of reconstitution or ‘humanizing.’ There’s no innocence in these made-up images. It’s why there could be laughter” (Huerta 2018, 112).

The laughter induced by performances such as the queer spatial appropriation enacted by Juliesy in “Episode Two”⁷ as she scales and planks a public city sign that reads “Hialeah, The City of Progress” (recalling the Mujeres Muralistas’ taking up of space at Chicano Park) fomented a local audience for their *chonga* drag through the circulation of the “Hialeah’s Finest” series on YouTube. As Profera elaborates, “Alongside and through the videos everyone learned how to accept us, so we got more acceptance in the night life scene. I’m starting to get the higher clientele, the ones that want to have a good time, a different vibe.” The eager consumption of the Juliesy and Karla personas parallels the commodification of *chonga* embodiment that occurred in the wake of the viral “Chongalicious” video of 2007, which branded the young performers as upcoming Latina “starlets” with crossover potential. Like the “Chongalicious” creators Dávila and Di Lorenzo, Profera and Garcia created these performances in the context of their leisure time together as friends and they did not set out to create a product. Yet the spectacular embodiments and performances of *chonga* identity they authored have nevertheless been received as such, prompting these performers to draw what cultural and material capital could accrue from an identity that in vernacular contexts often constitutes a liability to social, educational, and economic success in a neoliberal context (Ramos-Zayas 2012). Spurred by the local



Figures 33.13, 33.14, and 33.15. Juliesy and Karla plank the City of Hialeah sign in the YouTube video “Hialeah’s Finest: Episode Two.”

coverage they received following the posting of the “Hialeah’s Finest” videos by publications such as the *Miami New Times*, Juliesy and Karla started booking steady gigs at straight clubs where, rather than a social atmosphere, their performances were received more like a “circus act,” according to Garcia, who quickly added, “It pays the bills. I ain’t complaining.”

Performing in gay venues was not a vastly different experience, as their performances were often mocked. As Profera explains, “We had to move away from the [Miami] Beach to get the opportunity. When we moved out of the Beach we went to Wynwood, now we’re with all of these artists.” Leaving the homonormative club scene in Miami Beach led the performers to the Wynwood arts district, and to collaborations with local queer artists like Sleeper, who suggested that they collaborate on organizing their own queer night at The Corner bar, a straight venue.

They established Counter Corner, a queer party night, in 2014, and it continues to feature emerging drag talent on the third Sunday of every month. The parties have become so popular that the venue can barely hold attendees. The space has also fomented a decidedly genderqueer and tropicalized, Miami-specific mode of drag aesthetic innovated by performers such as Queef Latina, Miss Toto, and Jupiter Velvet. As Profera explains, “Counter Corner is a strictly queer party and I do that for the community. Because I love that scene. It’s young artists that just need self-expression they are not getting in their day to day lives so they dress up.” In reflecting on the unprecedented growth of Counter Corner Garcia reflects, “The first time we hosted there were very few people. Now you get there and you can’t even move. I cry almost every single Counter Corner. People say, ‘Thank you for creating this judgement-free space. I don’t feel like I’m gonna be harassed.’ Trans, straight, queer—I have gotten to know people on a personal level. Everyone there is woke as fuck. It’s become a safe space.” Garcia and Profera juxtapose Counter Corner to the more mainstream gay venues in the city that operate on a homonormative framework that is exclusionary to femme, larger-bodied, and trans queers. Their cocreation of this place, amid the rapid gentrification of downtown Miami, mirrors the queer spatial appropriation they performed when planking the “Hialeah: City of Progress” sign. Counter Corner signifies an alternative urban narrative of “progress” that thrives on *suciedad*.

Through their friendship and *chonga* aesthetic, Profera and Garcia put chongivity activity to work in creating an alternative queer space in the midst of increasing gentrification and displacement of working-class communities of color, primarily Black, and artists in Miami. As *sucias* extradonaire, Juliesy and Karla exhibit how “sucia genders signal possibilities of a queer sustenance within rapidly aggressive moves to destroy alternative imaginaries of joy and intimacy and care. Such sustenance requires a dedication to labor, love, and loss in *lo sucio*: socialities, kinship, and nightlives that cultivate daily divestment and sustainability of what [queer theorist José Estebán] Muñoz has described as ‘that which is not yet here’ within the worlds of hetero- and homonormative fictions

of comfort and inheritance” (ibid. 718). For the performers, *chonga* hyperfemininity served as an iconography of relation, a practice, and, importantly, as Profera describes, a feeling: “All of our stuff is impromptu. We’d have little pin points to hit, but it was all on feeling. We know the song. We created these characters, and it’s been an amazing experience. Like, I don’t know where I’d be in my life without Juliesy. She’s a part of me, you know? That *chonga* bro, and I get to express that and people think it’s fucking hilarious. I think it’s fucking hilarious. And when it’s not funny to me anymore, I’ll stop.”

Through various acts of gender, aesthetic, and sexual troublemaking, *chongivity* activity, as enacted by this intergenerational group of cultural producers, draws on the power of Latinx hyperfemininity to foment mutual recognition, belonging, and place-making among women and queer Latinx who navigate hostile social contexts. While engaging in *chongivity* activity can make one the target of policing and denigration both inside and outside of Latinx communities, its ethos of collaboration opens avenues for cultural and social formations that celebrate and make possible radical forms of performing Latinidad.

NOTES

- 1 My thinking on place-making draws from Paola Bacchetta, Fatima El-Tayeb, and Jin Haritaworn’s critical intervention “Queer of Colour Formations and Translocal Spaces in Europe,” which defines QPoC place-making as “concrete strategies of resistance and disturbance that disrupt, however momentarily, the exclusionary coherence of spaces assumed to be white and/or straight” (2015, 775).
- 2 The red of the lipstick has significantly faded over time but can be seen in early documentation of the mural.
- 3 My thinking on Latina survivance draws from Juana María Rodríguez’s (2016) analysis of the complex negotiations of power Latina porn star Vanessa Del Rio narrates in her *testimonio 50 Years of Slightly Slutty Behavior*.
- 4 My interview with Giovanni Profera was conducted in Miami in August 2015. The interview with Josue Garcia occurred in Miami in July 2016.
- 5 The performer’s access to these spaces were facilitated by Profera’s networks in the Miami nightlife scene. He had garnered a local following after playing the role of a flamboyant gay pageant coach in the short independent film *La Pageant Diva* (2011).
- 6 “Hialeah’s Finest: Episode One,” accessed May 26, 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Ao5OmiWETU.
- 7 “Hialeah’s Finest: Episode Two,” accessed May 26, 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xF9BtEcrC4.

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