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In the final minutes of her hour-long show on June 19, 2018, MSNBC host Rachel Maddow struggled to read breaking news about Mexican and Central American babies and toddlers being housed in “tender age” shelters along the US-Mexico border. Overcome with emotion, Maddow, who tried several times to regain her composure, had to “hand off” the report. Although she later apologized for her on-air reaction, Maddow’s outpouring of emotion was apropos of the situation and reflective of the horror of kids being taken from their parents or guardians, who had no guarantee they would ever see them again. Maddow was by no means alone in her sentiments, but for many of us, the situation was not new. The only difference was the scale of these more aggressive zero-tolerance initiatives and the undeniable “brownness” of the situation. José Esteban Muñoz describes brownness as “a conceptual framing that launches us into a vaster consideration of the ways in which people and things suffer and experience harm under the duress of local and global forces that attempt to diminish their vitality and degrade their value” (“The Brown Commons.”) It is crucial that we make these vaster considerations of the political and institutional forces at work against Latinx populations, especially those aimed at children, whether at the border, in the borderlands, or beyond. Of equal importance is identifying how they respond to these kinds of oppression.

With its focus on stories, in many forms, by and about Mexican American children, *Voices of Resistance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Chican@ Children's Literature* feels both timely and exigent. The brownness of the collection is evident, particularly in its “claiming and giving intellectual consideration to a rich Chican@ children’s literary tradition, long overlooked by scholars in multiple fields,” but also in the texts and pedagogical strategies it offers to countermand those ideological forces determined to minimize or limit the experiences of Latinx

children (xii). Moreover, its borderlands sensibility, as informed by Gloria Anzaldúa, is also undeniable. Anzaldúan thought percolates throughout the chapters, especially those included in the final section. Editors Laura Alamillo, Larissa M. Mercado-López, and Cristina Herrera have assembled a diverse range of critics whose work moves well beyond familiar conversations and texts in their considerations of resistance in Chican@ children's literature. As the editors explain, "In this work, scholars from various fields come together to describe how Chican@ children's literature raises questions on themes related to identity, social inequality, marginalization, [and] raciolinguistic ideologies," as well as social formation and activism (xi). The collection is an archive, a ready-made reading list, and body of critical work adaptable to a range of courses from literature and cultural studies to history and cultural anthropology. In offering "an alternative way to look at Chican@ children's literature," the editors and contributors of *Voices of Resistance* forge new ground across disciplines (xii).

The book opens with a foreword by Juan Felipe Herrera, Poet Laureate of the United States from 2012-15. In it, he demonstrates how young readers can feel empowered through reading, particularly when they see themselves and the world around them reflected on the page. After posing a series of questions about how we might begin to talk and think about Chican@ children's literature, Herrera calls readers' attention to "new literary critics and culture visionaries" who "alert us [. . .] to a new way of seeing too," which he puts forth as the focus of the collection (viii). Returning to his framing narrative, we see how formative reading with his grandmother from a Spanish-language primer, despite its age and condition, was for him as a reader and artist. Therefore, the editors' decision to begin the "Introduction" with a discussion of the 2010 ban on Mexican American Studies by the Tucson Unified School District is a powerful one because Herrera has already shown readers how imperative it is to access texts that help us make meaning of the world around us. Along with historical and sociological texts, the ban included Chican@ literature, thereby "disconnecting students from literature that was relevant to not only their cultural lives, but to their adolescent lives" (x). So when the editors state that their "book reexamines how we view multicultural and diversity literature and how we recognize literature that impels social transformation," the stakes could not be more clear (x). Following the brief introduction, the book is divided into three parts. Apparent in each section is the idea

that “[a]t the forefront of the collection is the education of Chican@ children and how the use of Chican@ children’s literature transforms classroom pedagogy” (xiv). This priority manifests in both theory and/or praxis throughout the work.

Section I, “Tracing Chican@ Identity and Consciousness,” makes evident the breadth of Chican@ experiences as related to culture, geography, temporality, and tradition. In the prelude to the section, the editors cite recent data highlighting that Latinos in the United States account for one of every four children in K-12 classrooms, further substantiating the educational imperatives of *Voices of Resistance*. They also outline the importance of the distinction between Chican@ and other pan-ethnic terms such as Hispanic or even Latin@, particularly in light of the fact that anti-immigrant sentiments, racial profiling, criminalization, and other political and social campaigns, such as detention, are frequently targeted toward individuals of Mexican descent. The chapters in this section, often drawing from Rudine Sims Bishop’s essay “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors” (1990), take readers into a number of different places and spaces: the archives and a dangerous past where we hear the voices of young women pushing back against social and cultural determinants in their efforts to self-define (Larissa Mercado-López); the cathedrals of capitalism, where commodified culture and “imagineering” are instrumental in the “making” of a New Mexican American girl (Patricia Trujillo); the world of Día de los Muertos and its affective landscapes without the use of stereotypes (Roxana Loza and Tanya González); and institutional spaces, classrooms and libraries, where Chican@ children’s literature can be a part of transformational pedagogies that enrich the educational development of children (Lettycia Terrones). The chapters in this section are not only smart but also thoughtfully show how texts such as the ones they discuss might be incorporated into classroom learning.

In the prelude to Section II: “Negotiating Gender and Sexuality,” the editors point out that “[a]s student populations grow increasingly more diverse, educators must adopt texts that reflect the realities of young children of color,” including those “whose genders, ethnicities, languages, and socioeconomic backgrounds are rarely visible in course materials” (59). The chapters in this section address themes such as “masculinity, queerness, racial/ethnic identity formation, and complex familial relationships that shape the protagonists’ lives as they navigate the world

around them” (59). Many of these issues, especially in Mexican American communities, go undiscussed. Moreover, there is an unwillingness to address the cultural and social impact of, for example, toxic masculinity, familial conflicts, or queerness. Phillip Serrato and Sonia Alejandra Rodríguez, engage in a form of critical masculinity studies in their respective chapters; their perspectives are informed by feminism, gender studies, cultural studies, and queer theory. When placed in dialogue, their work creates critical awareness about patriarchal masculine performance and how systemic oppression limits or forecloses on particular kinds of roles for Chicano men and boys. Similarly, Cristina Herrera analyzes mother-daughter conflict and Cecilia J. Aragón considers the role of counternarratives in the creation of sexual and queer imaginaries; their chapters expose the underlying systems of male power and heterosexism embedded in Chican@ cultural traditions, such as the quinceañera, and in children’s literature. The strength of this section is in the interdisciplinary approach of the chapters and the absolute insistence “on the need to include children’s and YA texts into larger disciplinary conversations that have tended to erase literature for younger audiences” (59). Doing so, as the authors prove, moves critical considerations of children’s literature into exciting new territories.

The final section, “Transformational Pedagogies: Reflections from Inside and Outside the Classroom,” features “chapters for educators who are interested in reexamining and resisting teaching practices that young, Chican@ children are subjected to in the context of school-based literacy reforms” (121). Anzaldúa’s concepts concerning language, “mestiza consciousness,” “conocimiento,” and activism, for example, frame much of the analysis in Section III. The authors highlight linguistic and cultural sites, present in illustration, film, folklore, and fiction, that provide opportunities for sustained critical reflection. Furthermore, the authors “present Chican@ children’s literature that validate[s] and affirm[s] linguistic diversity in the classroom” (121). Whether it is through an analysis of the relationship between language and feminist pedagogy (Elena Avilés), promoting Chican@ literature to create linguistically sustaining classrooms (Lilian Cibils, Enrique Avalos, Virginia Gallegos, and Fabián Martínez), advocating for the use of Chican@ children’s literature to elevate language practices (Laura Alamillo) or as a catalyst for consciousness raising and activism in young readers (Katherine Elizabeth Bundy), ultimately “[e]ach chapter presents Chican@ children’s literature that can spark a deeper interest

into reading quality children's literature and affirm cultural and linguistic identities" (122). At the same time, the authors recognize the experiential and epistemological diversity as part of Chican@ identity formation. The final essay concludes with the idea that "[c]ommunity is built in classrooms based on trust and students' possibilities, where student voice is fostered in emancipatory spaces centered on respect for the unique identities of students" (175). This innovative section illustrates with great clarity the wealth and variety of Chican@ texts available to educators, readers, and critics.

*Voices of Resistance* should be required reading for children's literature scholars and especially anyone working in the field of Chican@ literature. Too often, only a limited number of representative Chican@ and Latinx texts are taught or receive critical attention. Given the vital intervention the individual chapters make in the field of children's literature, not to mention Chican@ and Latinx studies more broadly, the book (and readers) would have benefitted from a more substantive introduction, or the section overviews might have been included as a part of the overall introduction. To the point, the significance of this book cannot be overstated. Contributors demonstrate repeatedly the volume and variety of Chican@ children's literature that is understudied, ignored, or awaiting analysis. More importantly, the book establishes the need for other collections that speak to the diverse issues facing Latinx children, including those from Central America. The urgency of brownness, particularly in the US, make such works imperative.

### Works Cited

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