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Latina/e lesbian archival praxis and memory work: a plática/roda de conversa with Malflora Collective

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ABSTRACT

Malflora Collective is a digital memory project dedicated to preserving the everyday lives, memories, and legacies of Latina/e lesbians through the publication of a podcast and magazine. In this article, members from Malflora Collective examine the nontraditional and community-based archival practices that Latina/e lesbians engage in, arguing that our memory work is rooted in collectivity, lived experience, and cultural reclamation as a form of decolonial praxis. We also explore how digital spaces provide opportunities for transnational engagement, solidarity, and discourse, while at the same time these spaces remain highly contested. This article theorizes a political praxis of Latina/e lesbian memory work through *plática/roda de conversa*, a blend of Chicana/e and Brazilian forms of knowledge-making through everyday conversation. These methods draw from familial archival practices and foreground the importance of our cultural identities in the process of archiving Latina/e lesbian stories. We offer our own *plática/roda de conversa* adapted from our inaugural Malflora Podcast episode to model the distinct archival practices Latina/e lesbians employ and assert the significance of this work within our current context of intensified state repression and erasure of LGBTQ+ and Latine communities. Altogether, this article highlights how noninstitutional archives and digital memory projects like Malflora Collective are crucial for preserving the stories of Latina/e lesbians and other marginalized communities, while fostering transnational solidarity in the face of cultural and political oppression.

KEYWORDS

Latina/Latinx/Latine;
lesbian; memory work;
digital archive

On a winter day in SoHo, a librarian visited Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, a space dedicated to the work of LGBTQIA+ artists to see the exhibition “a promise of lightning” by multi-disciplinary artist Andrea Geyer. Interspersed among silkscreen prints of Germany’s Black Forest, where Geyer grew up and came into her queerness, were photographs of queer organizers and activists culled from the gallery’s collection, a juxtaposition

proposing “ways to rethink queer histories of activism, organizing, and representation” (Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, 2024). As the librarian slowly browsed the exhibit, she stopped before one image in an assemblage of photographs—a large yellow banner with a painted outline map of North and South America encased by a pink triangle, beside the words: “COHLA Comité Homosexual Latinoamericano.” Two visible figures hold the banner aloft as they march in a protest, one wearing sunglasses and a bandana tied around their head, the other wearing a floppy black sunhat and sandals. The photograph was dated 1978.

The librarian was new to New York City. She could be called a “transplant,” many times over. Uprooted across disparate landscapes and ecosystems, learning to tenderly root herself in each: from her mamá’s pueblo in Zacatecas, Mexico; to her own smalltown Missouri childhood; and now a studio apartment in the city. When people asked, “Where is home?” the answer changed shape each time. Home, for her, was nebulous. Over time, she learned to find tethers, golden threads of memory—*hilos*—connecting her to the past and rooting her in the present: her ancestors, her queer kin, the *lesbianas* that came before her; the histories that bolstered her bold existence all became hilos woven between herself and home. Looking at the COHLA photograph, she felt a small thread of belonging begin to form. She did not recognize the figures and was not familiar with the organization, but now she knew they existed, here, in this city, long before she arrived. She could imagine herself marching with them. Later, as the librarian researched COHLA, she discovered it was founded by diasporic Latino/a gay men and lesbians in early 1970s New York City. The organization published a bilingual newsletter (COHLA Collective, 1978) and was represented by speaker Juanita Ramos at the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights (D.C. Media Committee, 1979). Juanita Ramos, the pseudonym used by Juanita Diaz-Cotto, later co-founded the Latina Lesbian History Project and edited *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians (An Anthology)*, published in 1987 (Ramos, 1987). The affective encounter described here is not an uncommon experience—whether through photographs in an exhibition, correspondence in a reading room, oral history in a podcast episode, or a multitude of other formats and genres, an archival encounter has the power to generate feelings of belonging, connection, and community by bridging the past into the present moment.

This experience of ancestral archival affect is precisely at the heart of Malflora² Collective, a digital memory project founded in 2024 to preserve the everyday lives, memories, and legacies of Latina/e lesbians. Malflora Collective’s ten members, including the aforementioned librarian, are based in the United States with roots in Brazil, Central America, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Tejas. Our work builds on a long legacy of archival praxis and memory work through the publication of a podcast and magazine.

As Latina/e lesbians and other lesbians of color have historically been overlooked in mainstream institutional and queer community archives, our project is guided by a core mission to resist erasure, assert our existence, and memorialize our histories for generations to come.

We specifically join a lineage of Latina/e lesbians who have engaged in decolonial memory work and used nontraditional archival methods to document our histories. Foundational anthologies that inspire our work include *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981) edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, the aforementioned *Compañeras: Latina Lesbians (An Anthology)* (1987) edited by Juanita Ramos, and *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About* edited by Carla Trujillo (1991). Malflora Collective also pays homage to Latina lesbian zines that circulated widely during this era, including *Esto no tiene nombre* (1991–1994) and its successor *Conmoción: Revista y red revolucionaria de lesbianas latinas* (1995–1996). The community-based, grassroots efforts of these projects inform our own political and archival praxis.

Malflora Collective also connects with and expands on contemporary Latina lesbian memory work that draws from oral histories of Latina lesbian elders and forwards creative approaches to archiving Latina lesbian histories. This includes groups and artists such as Butchlalis de Panochtitlan, an early 2000s Chicana/Latina butch performance group from Southern California and Denice Frohman, a Puerto Rican performance artist who debuted her one-woman show *Esto No Tiene Nombre* in 2023 (Aslo de la Torre, 2024; The Clemente, n.d.). Our work is also informed by the scholarship of Stacy I. Macias and Liliana C. Gonzalez, who commemorate the legacy and ongoing significance of Carla Trujillo's anthology *Chicana Lesbians* in their special issue of the *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, "Re-Engaging the Iconic Text 'The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About'" (2023). Similarly, our work builds from the histories archived in *On the Side of Angels: Latina Lesbian Activism*, an exhibit curated by Vanessa Esperanza Quintero and Jocelyne Sánchez that featured archival artifacts about Latina lesbians from the 1980s through the late 2000s (UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 2025). These collaborations contribute to our own conceptualization of Latina/e lesbian memory work as ancestral, affective, and rooted in community. While each of these works help preserve the legacies of Latina/e lesbians, there is no formal US-based archive dedicated to the distinct histories and lives of Latina/e lesbians. In this context, our work provides a much-needed digital hub where Latina/e lesbians can see ourselves reflected in the past and present.

In this article, we argue that Malflora Collective, as a site of Latina/e lesbian memory work, operates as decolonial feminist praxis through plática and roda de conversa, Chicana/e and Brazilian forms of dialogic

knowledge-making. As archival and ancestral tools, *plática* and *roda de conversa* redefine the archive as affective and relational. Our archival praxis draws from the scholarship of various Latine feminist and decolonial scholars, such as María Lugones, José Raimundo Oliveira Lima, Cindy O. Fierros and Dolores Delgado Bernal, to theorize *plática* and *roda de conversa* as practices that challenge epistemic violence, disrupt dominant archival logics, and sustain transnational modes of collective worldmaking. Below, we model this praxis through our own combined *plática/roda de conversa* focused on memory work practices within Malflora Collective, situating our project within a larger lineage of Chicane/Latine, queer, feminist, and decolonial digital memory work.

Archival resistance and the digital space

Latine/Chicane memory work is a political, archival, and decolonial practice rooted in survival and creative resistance. Scholars and artists frame memory as a record of the past and a strategy of community-making that counters erasure. Zepeda (2022) traces a genealogy of Indigenous and Latina/e lesbiana knowledge production through cultural and archival research, framing memory as a collaborative practice of care and intergenerational knowledge that resists heteropatriarchal erasure by remembering queer and femme histories. Building on visibility, Maria Cotera et al. (2023) frame Chicana memory work as a decolonial feminist praxis that unites theory, lived experience, and political action, where practices like *autohistoria* and *testimonio* facilitate historical recovery and intergenerational exchange. They highlight “memory-keeping” as transformative feminized labor, illustrating the relational and affective nature of knowledge-making (75–76). Juana María Rodríguez (2023) extends this by theorizing a *puta* epistemology grounded in rejecting respectability politics to show how memory circulates through stigmatized bodies and affective intensities. Rodríguez and Cotera et al. foreground how Latine memory work operates through embodied presence and affective ties. Malflora Collective builds on these traditions, functioning as a repository of Latine lesbian histories and a digital commons.

Latine/Chicane memory work shows how memory acts as an insurgent archive but bringing it into the digital requires grappling with technologies entangled with imperial and capitalist histories. While we acknowledge the digital’s utility in challenging conventional archival practices and as a platform for interdisciplinary digital humanities programming, we echo those who have insisted that cyberspace is not a site of liberation (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Nakamura, 2002; Ontiveros, 2013; Rodríguez, 2003). A reading of the digital in purely positivist terms ignores technological histories whose origins are inextricably linked to western imperialism and

the military-industrial complex. Our thinking here attends to critiques of digital utopianism, algorithms, tech economies, and the broader influence of digital tools in perpetuating systems of oppression online and in the maintenance of empire (Benjamin, 2019; Noble, 2018; Villa-Nicholas, 2023).

As our work is situated at the nexus of critical archival studies and digital humanities, we employ a working with and against politic that allows us to account for these implications while we continue to take up digital tools in our efforts. Our digital archival practice critically interrogates how systems of power have historically determined who and what is in the archive in ways that obscure the legacies of communities along the lines of race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability (Tuihawai Smith, 2008; Caswell et al., 2017). Latina/e lesbian centered works are often obfuscated twofold by dominant Latina/o *and* LGBTQ+ institutional archives, which forces us to work against the grain of hegemonic archival practices in both spaces. In addressing these realities, we likewise grapple with the “digital imperative,” where the digitization of archives methodologically replicates institutional processes in opposition to community-run archives (McKinney, 2020, p. 159). We utilize a digital archival practice that aims to mitigate epistemic harms historically experienced by Latina/e lesbians. This practice prioritizes collectivity, process over product *via encuentro* (Cotera, 2015), and embraces the ephemeral to challenge the limits of what is considered archival evidence (Muñoz, 1996). These tactics briefly emphasize how we strive to engage with digital tools to embody Latina/e lesbian collectivity against the limits of dominant powers.

More specifically, Malflora Podcast builds upon what Esther Díaz Martín (2025) terms “radiophonic feminisms”—a sonic form of feminist resistance to patriarchal knowledge systems and voices. By hosting pláticas/rodas de conversa with fellow Latina/e lesbians and queers, our podcast critically intervenes in the “soundscape of patriarchy,” including the male-dominated terrain of podcasting that so often reproduces misogynistic and homophobic ideals (Díaz Martín, 2025, p. 21). The auditory component of lesbian podcasting disrupts the dominance of men’s literal voices at the same time it invites intimacy between podcast co-hosts, guests, and listeners through a process of *convivencia*, “a culturally situated experience of sharing one’s presence in a space that is imbued with *cariño* (loving care)” (Díaz Martín, 2025, p. 10). The podcast form also enables us to archive the actual voices of Latina/e lesbians, which can foster a deeper sense of intimacy than the written word alone. Malflora Podcast ultimately operates in the digital space as a way to forge a community-based archive that resists erasure while sustaining Latina/e lesbian knowledge, memory, and relationality across time and space.

Latina/e lesbian memory work now: a plática/roda de conversa with Malflora Collective

Malflora Podcast activates the cultural and decolonial practices of plática/roda de conversa as memory work by creating and preserving memory through dialogue in the digital space, weaving hilos between podcast guests, hosts, and listeners. Plática refers to nonhierarchical, dialogic, knowledge-making practices within Chicanx communities that take place outside of formal institutions. Madelaine Cahuas and Lorena Muñoz (2024) position plática as a queer Chicana/Latina feminist methodology, where community-building and “Latinx socio-spatial knowledge” function as both an intimate conversation and a theorizing tool (227). Roda de conversa, a Brazilian dialogic practice drawing from Afro-diasporic traditions of the roda (circle), is central to cultural practices such as capoeira rodas, samba rodas, and spiritual gatherings like Candomblé. Within these circles, participants engage on equal terms and knowledge emerges through rhythm, reciprocity, and embodied presence (Lima, 2020). Roda de conversa and plática are deeply rooted in Latin American, Chicanx/Latinx, Indigenous, and Afro-diasporic traditions of knowledge production and speak to how knowledge circulates not just through institutions but through intimate, everyday spaces in Latine communities: family gatherings, conversations at the kitchen table, neighborhood exchanges, and community rituals (Carmona et al., 2018; Fierros & Bernal, 2016; Lima, 2020; Silva, 2023). Within these contexts, these practices emerge as much more than “small talk.” They are forms of critical engagement that blend storytelling, reflection, and dialogue as decolonial knowledge-making practices.

In the production of a plática/roda de conversa-based podcast, we do not merely document Latina/e lesbian lives; we travel into one another’s worlds. We understand “worlds” in the way Lugones describes them—not as a utopic—but as inhabited by flesh and blood people; they may be inhabited by people who are living, people who are dead, and by imaginary people (Lugones, 1987). Through the witnessing of each other’s worlds, we access the ways in which Latina/e lesbians understand themselves beyond the narrow frames imposed by institutional archives, dominant Latinidad, or mainstream LGBTQ+ historiographies.³ Below we share an edited plática/roda de conversa adapted from our first episode of Malflora Podcast, featuring a conversation between the collective’s members. We specifically highlight the parts of our conversation on the significance of Latina/e lesbian memory work, centering archival affect and interventions. By including our dialogue, we foreground how our lived experiences as lesbian and queer Latina/es are intimately part of a larger lineage of Latina/e lesbian memory.⁴

Anahí

As we dive more into our work, I want to get us to think about how we can ground what we're doing in the present moment and connect it to what is happening politically and socially. So I want to ask: why are Latina/e lesbian legacies important in a moment like now? How can the work we do here go beyond us as scholars and organizers, and how are we approaching this as a larger collective outside of just us in this podcast episode?

Meagan

Thank you so much for asking that question, Anahí. In terms of the origins of the project, I initially gathered inspiration from foundational collections like *Compañeras*, *Chicana Lesbians*, and *This Bridge Called My Back*. This long lineage of collective writing inspired me to think of Malflora Collective in a communal way, and I wanted to focus on lesbians because, as important as it is to see ourselves as part of a larger LGBTQ+ community, it's also important to showcase the individual forms of resistance, intimacy, and politics that stem from lesbians specifically, and Latina/e lesbians, in particular. Even within the signifier of "Latina/e lesbian," there's so much diversity, so this project also emerged to investigate that and unpack our stories as individuals as well as a larger collective.

When I was younger, I used to believe the rhetoric that "lesbian" is not radical in the way that "queer" is. As I read more literature and built stronger ties to other lesbians, I eventually realized that lesbians were actually doing what "queer" does and did prior to the term gaining popularity in the 1990s. That doesn't mean that it hasn't come without tensions or problems, but this history made me want to identify more with the term "lesbian" as I grew in my consciousness, and I began to push back against that widely held belief that it wasn't a radical orientation. I also want to emphasize that lesbian and queer are not in opposition. I personally identify as both lesbian and queer because I see them as interconnected, not conflicting.

Queer theorists who frame lesbian as less radical than queer have likely not tapped into the long history of Black and Brown lesbians organizing and writing about their experiences in radical ways. There is a distinct lineage of lesbians of color critiquing larger systems of power from an anti-racist, anti-colonial, lesbian political praxis that is often subsumed by an over-representation of white lesbian identity politics.⁵

Melissa

Meagan, your answer feels really aligned with what came to my mind. So for me, one of the most powerful aspects of archives is the affective

response, or emotional response, that happens when you see yourself, when you see—the word that you said: lineage...you know, there's something that happens when you are able to place yourself in a lineage and see a visual representation...It provides a bit of assurance, or affirmation, that says: "you belong to a community, you belong in history," and I think that's so important.

One thing that really drew me to Malflora is my background working in archives and learning about how materials are described in archives, which then impacts how they are found by people using them. When researching Latina lesbians, I'd come across a description of an archive or collection that I knew was created by a lesbian, but the word lesbian would not appear at all; that's another way that we get sort of erased or suppressed in the archive. So, I loved the idea of this collective as one that really foregrounds Latina/e lesbians, that these are the histories we're really giving a platform.

Mariana

In Brazil, we have a saying that we don't know where to go if we don't know where we came from. And this project is really rooted in that idea of how we can create this collective memory. That has so many shared commonalities across the hemisphere—how we are racialized, sexualized, and also erased in this specific way to take away radicalism from the word, the naming, and the political identity of "lesbian." I also do not believe that lesbian and queer are opposites or that we should exclude one, exclude the other.

I think there's many different layers that we need to bring back from our shared history. I have been organizing in Latin America for a very long time with grassroots organizations, lesbian grassroots organizations, lesbian feminist grassroots organizations, to be more specific. And when I came to the US to go back to grad school, and I wanted to talk about lesbians, people were like, "but what about lesbians? This is not necessary. There's no radicalism, there is no history there that we need to explore in the political context that we are in right now."

And I feel this project brings a perspective that is the opposite, right? What we are doing here to create this collective memory is specifically now in this political context. And I really like how you mentioned, as at this moment that we are recording, a lot of data is disappearing. A lot of words in research are being censored. Grants are disappearing for the things that we want to do, and we want to explore, and we need to talk about it. This is also a way to create space and collective memory, to not be erased. But also, to talk about individuality, right? What it means to be—for each one of us and the people we are going to bring to the podcast, and the people that we are going to publish in the magazine—what

it means to be a Latina/e lesbian, and how we express ourselves and how we create a shared process on how to be visible.

Guadalupe

What's most significant about this project, and something others here have already pointed to, is the long tradition of Latine and Chicane lesbians creating anthologies, art, and community spaces to stay connected and share knowledge. But beyond those strategies, there still isn't a dedicated, community-built archive centering us. That absence feels especially urgent today, when queer and lesbian histories are being attacked and erased from public memory and institutionalized narratives.

For me, the archive offers a space to build bridges across generations. I've worked with several queer and community-based digital archives, and it's still rare to find Latine or Chicane lesbians. So when I do come across someone in the archive who shares my history, it's deeply affirming. I remember my first archival experience finding a lesbian coffeehouse created by Chicana lesbians in San Diego. Just seeing the newsletters made me emotional. It felt like a touch across time, carrying the warmth and defiance of lives that refused invisibility.

I also think a lot about how women and femmes of color are often hesitant to place their stories into institutional archives. These spaces tend to privilege a sanitized, mainstream idea of queerness. Institutional archives often come with rules about what counts as "worthy" of preservation, and too often overlook the grassroots labor of Latina/e lesbians building community through everyday acts of care. That's why community-built archives matter: they allow us to define value and memory on our terms.

Our work with Malflora shows that "lesbian" is a political framework, a way of centering memory, care, and intergenerational dialogue. It's about making space for difficult, necessary conversations within and across our communities.

As others said, identifying as "lesbian" is no less political, radical, or expansive than "queer." They are not in competition and coexist as identity markers and political orientations. I've struggled with claiming "lesbian" because the term is often dismissed as outdated or exclusionary. Engaging with lesbian histories shifted my perspective. Whether it's marimacha, jota, dyke, or lesbian, embracing these words claims a lineage of resistance and ensures our histories and futures are shaped by us.

Alexandra

Absolutely. I resonate a lot with what everyone has said. First and foremost, lesbians are not a monolith; context, regionality, and history matter.

There is also this idea that lesbians are TERFy, as in trans exclusionary. If we look at the archive, we see that some lesbians were/are TERFy, but some were/are not. And some didn't have the right language because there are trans and non-binary lesbians. It's important to consider all the different terms associated with lesbian, like *marimacha* or *dyke*, words we've reclaimed.

And to answer your question more specifically, why now? If we think about when these anthologies came out, they were in response to erasure or in response to something happening politically, and for us, we emerge as a response to what is happening politically in terms of anti-Latine rhetoric, anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, and anti-immigrant rhetoric. We're challenging the idea that we have not been here for a long time and that queerness/lesbians are "new." We know that's not true, and our archival efforts prove that.

I do want to note that I do understand that representation is not everything and that representation isn't going to ultimately save us, but it is part of the larger constellation of how we continue to fight back.

Anahí

I just want to thank everyone for their thoughtful responses. I think so much of what everyone has said in different ways is really getting us to critically think about how the category of lesbian, and Latine lesbian at that, is really such an expansive term historically. We all fit into that in different kinds of ways, and it's a prerogative of this collective to situate these different perspectives justly.

We also want to ensure that it is a term that continues to expand with the needs of the people who embody it, ultimately employing an intersectional, anti-imperial, anti-TERF, decolonial lens to all of this, because these things don't happen in a vacuum.

Orality and the politics of knowledge production

While these insights from our podcast emerge from our lived experiences and collective reflections, they also resonate with established practices and theories that formalize this dialogic, community-based knowledge-making. The core purpose of *roda de conversa* is to democratize discussion and break the silence around important topics. By bringing together diverse voices, it enables the sharing of experiences and the co-creation of knowledge, which challenges dominant narratives—particularly those that are white, European, and male-centric. The concept of *oralecência*, or "the essence of orality," emphasizes that spoken word is a living form of knowledge that cannot be fully captured in writing, making these circles crucial

for transmitting ancestral wisdom. This is seen in communities like the *Quilombo of Conceição das Crioulas*, where elders are revered as living libraries, and the circles are central to a teaching method known as *Pedagogia Crioula* (Silva, 2023). In Afro-Latine and Afro-Brazilian contexts, the circle has long functioned as a space of resistance, survival, and creativity. Oral traditions like *roda de conversa* center voices systematically excluded from official archives, challenging the colonial privileging of the written word (Macmanus, 2020). They create conditions for polyvocality, allowing multiple stories to coexist without being forced into a single linear narrative.

Similarly, *plática* functions as storytelling and truth-telling within Chicane communities, making everyday conversation a knowledge-making and archival practice. By partaking in conversation, our bodies “re/member” and “chronicle what they endure; they are marked by a history of raced-gendered violence, persecution, and subjugation,” and yet, “our bodies give testimony, our bodies awaken” and we begin to heal” (Carmona et al., 2018, p. 31). Within these frameworks, storytelling operates not as anecdote, but as theory. Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of *conocimiento* positions personal and collective stories as pathways toward transformative knowledge, while Cherrie Moraga’s notion of theory in the flesh (Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1981; Moraga, 1983) reminds us that marginalized bodies generate knowledge from lived, embodied experience. We view *plática/roda de conversa* as a decolonial praxis akin to Lugones (2003) concept of faithful witnessing, as further elaborated by Figueroa-Vásquez (2015). Figueroa-Vásquez frames Lugones’ faithful witnessing as a decolonial feminist tool that renders visible the otherwise obscured operations and afterlives of coloniality, particularly in relation to power, knowledge production, and gender. These genealogies and epistemological foundations demonstrate that *plática* and *roda de conversa* are not merely methods of dialogue but deeply situated practices of decolonial knowledge production.

We blend *plática/roda de conversa* to reflect our intimate connections to both Brazilian and Chicanx forms of knowledge-making while also forwarding a theoretical framework for Latina/e lesbian memory work that is culturally relevant across hemispheres. *Plática/roda de conversa* affirms that theory is not confined to universities or texts but can be generated through the rhythms of everyday life, storytelling, and the collective creation of memory across generations. The excerpts from our inaugural episode shared above model this dialogic and community-based practice used to archive our own insights as Latina/e lesbians and queers, while the podcast *writ large* focuses on preserving the histories of other Latina/e lesbian and queer community members. We continue this practice through our season one podcast conversations with Chicana lesbian writer Carla Trujillo, trans and queer Chicanx historian and activist Lydia Otero, Tejane

drag performers SirGio and Gacho Marx, San Diego-based Nicaraguan-Italian photographer Fedella Lizeth, and Afro-Brazilian journalist and scholar Paula Silveira-Barbosa. In each of these episodes, and those forthcoming, we employ *plática/roda de conversa* to preserve the stories of each guest through dialogues about their upbringing, work, relationship to lesbianism, and more. *Plática/roda de conversa* here create conditions for mutual recognition: podcast participants and co-hosts speak from lived experience, and listeners engage not as extractive researchers but as relational witnesses accountable to shared histories, forming interconnected *hilos* across time and space.

Conclusion: hilos of memory and networks of solidarity across borders

As a multimodal memory project, Malflora Collective centers Latina/e lesbian histories and everyday lives in response to the twofold historic erasure of Latina/e lesbians from Latina/o and LGBTQ+ institutional archives. Community-based archives and digital memory projects like Malflora Collective are forms of Latina/e lesbian memory work that not only preserve history but also enact a decolonial praxis that reimagines the archive as political, embodied, and connected to community. As we have argued, Latina/e lesbian memory methods like *plática/roda de conversa* function as praxis that center collectivity, lived experience, and the ephemeral as critical forms of knowledge productions that challenge hegemonic archives as well as resist erasure. In a moment marked by a fascist political landscape that continues to escalate attacks on our communities in the US and beyond, Latina/e lesbian memory work emerges as an insurgent practice of world-making—one that not only remembers, but creates the conditions for collective survival, belonging, and liberatory futures.

Our work is part of a legacy of queer, Latine, digital community-based archives such as Archivo de La Memoria Trans, Jotxs y Recuerdos, Arquivo Lésbico Brasileiro, and Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos Archive. While Malflora takes up digital tools as subversive, albeit imperfect, methods across a social media archive and a podcast, we also continue the legacy of creating and circulating Latina/e lesbian print-based media through the production of a physical magazine. Through an archival practice rooted in collectivity, created by members of our communities for our communities, we weave *hilos* of connection and memory across our disparate geographies and temporalities, *hilos* that illuminate the ties between us in our present moment across Latin America and in diaspora, between our predecessors and those who will come after us. Ultimately, we offer Malflora Collective as a countercultural space for preserving, celebrating, and sharing the diverse lives and legacies of Latina/e lesbians around the world.

Notes

1. Our names are listed in alphabetical order by last name, as we each maintain equal authorship. We also want to note that this article is co-authored by six of ten members currently part of Malflora Collective. We encourage readers to learn more about our entire collective at <https://malflora.org/>
2. “Malflora,” adapted from the slur “manflora,” is a term for lesbians that translates to “bad flower.” In 1976, Chicano artist Joey Terrill helped popularize the term with a series of shirts he made for the Christopher Street West pride parade that featured the reclaimed slurs “malflora” and “maricón.” We similarly reclaim the term “malflora” as a source of empowerment and resistance for Latina/e lesbians. See Kiara Ventura (2018), Adriana Fuentes Ponce (2015), and Norma Mogrovejo (2000) for more on the term’s origin.
3. Latin American lesbian feminist scholarship frames lesbian identity as a collective and relational. Ángela G. Alfarache Lorenzo (2003) and Ángela Ixkic Bastian Duarte (2012) position lesbofeminismo as an epistemological intervention beyond institutional recognition. Norma Mogrovejo (1999, 2000) traces Mexican lesbian organizing as a fragmented and persistent political realm that leaves informal, transnational archives. Building on this, we frame Latina/e lesbian archival praxis as relational, ephemeral community-based memory work that fosters solidarity amidst erasure.
4. While our first episode features Malflora Collective members, the rest of the podcast centers on preserving the stories of other Latina/e lesbian community members. The full episode featured here, as well as others, can be accessed at www.malflora.org/podcast.
5. See The Combahee River Collective (1981), Cheryl Clarke (1981), Audre Lorde (1984), Cherrie Moraga (1983), and Gloria Anzaldúa (1987).

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