

MANIFESTO ON FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES

Nahuala Indómita

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INTRODUCTION¹

In Nahuala Indómita, we question pedagogical practice from an ecofeminist perspective as our point of departure. First, we reflect on how our knowledge has been constructed. To that end, we start from the concept of “*sentipensares*,” which allows us to understand how embodiment and our contexts are involved in generating knowledge.² Next, we reflect on our own individual and collective experiences: lived situations that became the seed of new perspectives from which transformative knowledge emerged. Lastly, we share how, based on our experience, we have implemented “*desaprendizaje*” that has involved transforming our knowledge construction. With a heart full of gratitude, we share our manifesto—the result of our participation in the conference LAPES 2022. Such a manifesto became enriched after space was opened to listen to collective minds and knowledges during the conference, creating an atmosphere where we allowed ourselves to feel ourselves, listen to ourselves, and look at ourselves. We share a manifesto that accompanies us as we engage in

- 1→ Translators’ note: As translators, we have aimed for discursive practices that matched, to the extent possible, the authors’ voices and intentions. We acknowledge the unequal power dynamics that come with translating an article written by Mexican authors in their Spanish, which moves away from normative linguistic practices in the intentional use of non-binary gender forms and Nahual expressions. Language is a conduit for knowledge, and as such, it must be carefully practiced.

In seeking to maintain consistently the decolonial and feminist values inherent in the content of the article and the non-normative language practices used by the authors, we (translators) made similar choices in relation to colonial monolingual English by intentionally selecting some language forms over others. First, we sought to create a decolonial English translation by maintaining the identity of the text through language choices like “*compañeras*” or “*calle*” and showcase moments of resistance against the dominant English, just like the authors did when introducing Nahual expressions.

Additionally, we aimed to convey multiple forms of gender expression evident in the Spanish text by making a distinction between: 1) the authors’ own gender expressions as “*nosotras*” to which we added the descriptor “*we (fem)*”; and 2) the non-binary and non-conforming gender expressions in Spanish (i.e., “*otrxs*”), to which we did not add gender descriptors and left unmarked (i.e., “*others*”).

It is our hope that these small discursive elements will give readers an opportunity to engage with the text “with the respect it deserves” (in the authors’ words) and embody, as they read it, the knowledges called for in the piece.

- 2→ According to Cepeda (2017), “*Sentipensar* is a verb composed of the verbs “*feel*” (*sentir*) and “*think*” (*pensar*). It is both to think with feeling and feel with thinking.” (Translators’ note). Cepeda, Juan, “The problem of being in Latin America: Approaching the Latin American ontological *sentipensar*.” *Journal of World Philosophies* 2, no. 1 (2017).

actionable practices to transform pedagogies from perspectives outside of hegemonic lenses—perspectives that resonate in our hearts today more attentively than ever.

MANIFESTO CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE PART I

Here, we(fem) share time to make a pause to express gratitude for the space created at the conference, knowledges, and our collective presence; a pause to also let us just breathe.

We(fem) begin citing Marisa Belausteguigoitia and Araceli Mingo because this is how knowledge construction works: recognizing where we are taking ingredients from, *algo por aquí, otro de este lado y un poco de esto también* / something over here, some more from other there, and a little bit from here too.

In their words, “*Una de las encrucijadas que han capturado al pensamiento educativo y sus relaciones con el feminismo y los estudios de género es la tensión existente entre la concepción de la educación como liberadora y la educación justamente como lo contrario, como la reproductora de la opresión y de todo aquello que lo libera*” / “One of the crossroads that have captured educational thought and its relations with feminism and gender studies is the existing tension between the conception of education as liberating and education as precisely the contrary, as reinforcing oppression and everything that liberates” (Belausteguigoitia & Mingo 1999).³

And we(fem) ask ourselves, how do we construct our knowledges? Who gives value to what we learn?

Within the society where we live, the learning that is most valued is the one obtained within the academy. The education that is inexcusable for us(fem) to not have is that from an institution. And here the question is, what is it that makes us elevate this type of knowledge?

Exactly. It is called the patriarchy.

That very same system of beliefs is one that calls collective

3 → Belausteguigoitia, Marisa, y Araceli Mingo. 1999. “Fuga a dos voces”, en *Géneros prófugos. Feminismo y educación*. Ciudad de México: Paidós.

knowledge “*usos y costumbres* / usage and traditions” while calling institutional knowledge “*ciencia* / science.” And that is how knowledge becomes hierarchical, which is reflected in the management of health, food, care, and *quehaceres* / duties. For example, the Reggio Emilia pedagogy that emerged after World War II in Italy, is based on wonder, on the innate ability to discover and to be curious. It is a pedagogy that invites us to constantly ask ourselves, what is important for me to learn at this moment in my life? It invites us to do the exercise of going back to our inner girls and ask them, what is important for you to learn? It can be hard at first to realize that many of the questions and the skills that we wished for as children are still in that wish box. And they are still there because, unfortunately, in many spaces, contexts, or environments, we realize that what we want to learn does not go with the school books or the lessons of our caregivers and we downplay the importance of what we aspire to learn.

Today, we(fem) say: “we want to be part of spaces where the importance of honoring our diverse needs and diverse contexts prevails, where knowledge construction responds to corazones-curiosidades and the real needs of each one of us(fem).”

CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE PART II

During these years of sharing, in the company of many *compañeras*, we have recognized that the most important process for us is unlearning. We began to question ourselves about absolutely everything, and the most tangible thing we saw was the care for our surroundings. Each one of us with our own processes, but with a very common line, we began focusing our life projects with a radical thought that is hyper-anticapitalist. It was hard to realize that we are immersed in this patriarchal, hetero-capitalist world, but that also gave us the strength to resist from within. Now with our feet on the ground, literally and metaphorically, we are in the process of constructing new knowledge.

In line with what the Abya Yala⁴ communal feminist *compañeras* name, we seek to live autonomously, and although it may sound contradictory to some, we also seek to live collectively. And it happened: what is personal is political. What is political is collective, as well. And from there, we have built our collective knowledge.

We are faithful believers that listening is one of the most powerful tools we have, and together we have built collective spaces where we sit down to lend our ears to listen, unlearn ourselves ... and of course, learn ourselves as well.

TRANSFORMATION OF KNOWLEDGE PART I

And it has been like that, learning to listen to ourselves is also a part of it. Once again, as our community feminist *compañeras* say: seeing things differently isn't a conflict, but an opportunity to look for wealth and harmony in everyone's eyes to strengthen the robustness of the community.

Nahuala is born thereby, after striving for the collectivization of knowledges that we are obtaining. Unlearning daily practices that have damaged so much and adding practices that align with our search for the dignified coexistence of interspecies.

We (fem) have learned that the oppressions against us caused by heteropatriarchal capitalism are also against nature; with this in mind, we actively decide to be part of the fight where both struggles come together. And at that moment in which we are able to understand how problems can be disrupted, we realized that we were transforming our knowledge. From that manner we were learning about "who am I listening to?" and the way we are sharing our learning "how do I get this message across?"

Getting the message across has been quite a challenge as well.

4 → Abya Yala is the term that designates the territory that includes the American continent. It was used by the Kuna, a native community that lives in Colombia and Panama, and means Mature Land, Living Land or Flowering Land (Carrera and Ruiz 2016). Today we use it as an action that seeks the decolonization of the name of the territory we inhabit. Carrera Maldonado, Beatriz, y Zara Ruiz Romero, eds. 2016. "Prólogo." *Abya Yala Wawgeykun: Artes, Saberes y Vivencias de Indígenas Americanos*. Vol. 1. Acer-VOS. Patrimonio Cultural Iberoamericano.

And it is that not all spaces receive messages in the same way, and sometimes it is also learning to understand that there are spaces in which our voices are not going to resonate in the way we would like. But we continue in constant search of it, learning by which trail we must follow this path of daily resistance.

And so we ask ourselves, are feminist pedagogies necessary to address racial, patriarchal, extractivist, and colonial capitalism around the world? We think so. We have learned that if we don't fight for our home and for the species that inhabit it, fighting for everything else will be half done. The oppressions are interconnected and as many of our *compañeras* from Abya Yala who defend the land and territory say, "*no estamos defendiendo a la vida, somos la vida defendiéndose* / we are not defending life, we are life defending itself."

Feminist pedagogies are, in general, contextualized to moments, places, and oppressions. Because we believe that those pedagogies make us transform our daily actions, and as part of them, transform those of others, we are making a big difference. We know that it is not easy in all contexts, but we invite us not to remain silent anymore, let us tell why we do things. Even if our voice trembles when doing it.

Even being perceived as nature, from a very essentialist perspective, patriarchy has clouded our *sentires* (feelings and senses) and has led us to the point that if we want to stand out we need to rationalize everything, feel less. However, we are learning that feeling is also a fundamental part of this knowledge transformation process. Our proposal is that we learn by feeling, empathizing, and listening. So when we are about to start a learning process, we recognize what our feelings, both emotional and physical, are at that moment. Because it will also shape what we are left with from each learning experience.

TRANSFORMATION OF KNOWLEDGE PART II

We propose on ourselves to honor all the learning-knowledge that shapes us. From our morning awakening, we can learn about how the sun rose, the shapes of the clouds, what the air smells like, how the

body feels. We always ask this of ourselves and it is very complex: to hold ourselves up. “*Sin prisa pero sin pausa / slowly but surely*,” one of our moms always says.

“*Sentir y entender que en la escuela no somos solo producción de conocimientos, sino personas con cuerpo y sexuadas, no divisibles entre mente y cuerpo somos un todo dinámico, y que no somos sujetos con una ‘materialización abstracta’ / To feel and understand that at school we are not just the production of knowledge, but embodied individuals, not divisible between mind and body, we are a dynamic whole, and that we are not subjects with an ‘abstract materialization’*” (Acaso 2011).⁵

APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE PART I

One of the most tangible examples for us is the permaculture, which invites us to understand ourselves as part of a whole. Learning to listen-observe our body—as the first territory we inhabit, in the words of Lorena Cabnal—and learn to listen-observe the environment-territory beyond our own bodies as inhabitants. In this way, also learning about the individual and collective needs, to start from there to build, cultivate, act, create. We have also learned that at the same time communal and indigenous feminism is positioned with the intention of not confronting or drafting from individual rights, but collective ones; from the community as a place of common identity and ancestral memory.

Aligning with our transformation of knowledge together with ancestral knowledge, we have learned differently from the *cosmogonía* Maya and with the respect that it deserves, we bring up three concepts that resonate our *sentipensares*.

5 → Acaso, Maria, Elizabeth Ellsworth y Carla Padró. 2011. *El aprendizaje de lo inesperado*. Madrid: Catarata.

K'AT es un día del calendario maya, tiene que ver con el tejer o entretejer de la vida, la unidad de la comunidad, la red. El valor de la colectividad dentro de la comunidad y tejer la unidad dentro de la cultura Maya reconoce la diversidad, que se conoce como el kulaj—tz aqat (dualidad y la complementariedad); así mismo la cuatridad; el q'uch (reciprocidad solidaridad, apoyo mutuo); son elementos que permiten convivir en el equilibrio y la armonía / K'AT is a day of the Mayan calendar, it has to do with the weaving or interweaving of life, the unity of the community, the network. The value of collectivity within the community and weaving unity within the Mayan culture recognizes diversity, which is known as the kulaj—tz aqat (duality and complementarity); likewise the quadriness; the q'uch (reciprocity, solidarity, mutual support); They are elements that allow us to live in balance and harmony. (Sanic y Paz, 2013).⁶

We learn from what surrounds us, and with these three concepts, the Mayan cosmogony invites us to recognize the diversity that inhabits us and with which we live. These are concepts that many communities, from the territories we(fem) inhabit (Guatemala and Mexico), come along with in the structure of community and knowledge, weaving between generations from the concepts of collectivity and respect.

There lies the challenge and the beauty: to bring the learning to daily life and to appreciate the same learnings from daily life. To ask ourselves, how do we relate to each other?, in all the ways possible, with our bodies, our persons, our spaces, the life that occupies those spaces, with the lives that only cross us momentarily, amongst other lives. In this way, within our relations comes the way we speak, what we eat. A myriad of whats and hows.

6 → Sanic, Y. y Juan José Hurtado Paz y Paz. 2013. *Aportes desde la cosmovisión y mujeres mayas para la prevención de la violencia de género*. Guatemala: Asociación Pop N'oj.

APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE PART II

We believe that one of the most important lessons in the long and ongoing feminist fight in Latin American and the Caribbean is to collectivize the work we do at the individual level. Acting local and thinking global also applies to our everyday life with people. Communicate, empathize, try to understand where the other person is acting from. This also frees us.

Leaving the whitewashed and westernized academy resonates with us, since we need more *calle* to listen more to ourselves and to learn other daily lives. We believe that relearning can also be intergenerational. There are things that we have unlearned that we could reintegrate into our daily lives, synergizing with our new visions. For us(fem), it is a daily decision to be part of this collective change and to recognize the oppressions and privileges that frame us. We believe that acting in this way allows us to have more clarity of where and where to act.

CLOSINGS

We(fem) have decided everyday to reflect about our interspecies relationship. We choose to question how we can align with ourselves and also with our surroundings. We think about our bodies, about our nutrition, where what we consume comes from, what had to happen for us to be able to nourish ourselves from it, who was involved in that process. We also question our own ways of relating ourselves to the affective and sexual-affective level. We have witnessed great growth in understanding ourselves from there, what role our bodies play, our experiences as girls, as teens.

We also question the ways we want to live, what we consume, with whom we want to collectivize, what we want to do in our day to day. We continue to build ourselves while recognizing that this is a constant journey, that perhaps it will never stop. And we know that there is always an opportunity to learn new ways of (re)construction, transformation, and to apply (on ourselves as well) new knowledge.

And definitely to rest. There is so so so much to question, but resting is also fundamental. To guard ourselves, to disconnect and listen to ourselves, and in this way to acquire tools and strength to continue. Let's build pedagogies that value rest and in this way let's abandon the capitalist need to produce knowledge without an end in sight. ■

