
Gloria Anzaldúa – Chicanas in the Borderlands

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Abstract

Chicanas naturally live in between two cultures. Their everyday lives take place – geographically – in the US, but their ties to the Mexican culture stay strong. Most families keep up with Mexican traditions and old values, oftentimes their "barrio" is Mexican-dominated, their interaction with Anglo-Americans is limited.

Gloria Anzaldúa was a pioneer in focusing on their way of life and building a theory around this way of life. In *Borderlands – The New Mestiza* she gives us an account of the implications this man-made geographical border has. It leads to a constant inner conflict between a public and a private being. The public being is influenced by the individualistic American culture which can lead to a torn private being. For this reason Anzaldúa emphasizes the border not only as a geographical one, but also as a border between genders, classes and sexuality. Chicanas are affected by and discriminated because of all of them.

Many of these restrictions are based on myths and historical legends that do not hold up today. In *Borderlands* Anzaldúa gives us an account of history from a Chicana's perspective – neither the common Anglo-American one, nor a Mexican or Chicano one. Being caught up in this situation – seemingly without a chance to escape - leads to Helena Viramontes saying she is not living on the border, but she feels she herself is the border.

To get out of this social prison, Chicanas have to find their individual path. This seems to only work outside of their close-knit, restricting family. Finding their own way means they have to find their definition of the border, decide whether they want to stay restricted by the border and its ties, become part of it or build their own culture with elements of the Mexican and the American cultures.

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