
Transformation en la Frontera: Gloria Anzaldúa and the ‘Problem’ of Immigration

Natalie Cisneros*¹

¹Seattle University – United States

Abstract

The perceived problem of immigration and debates about how to solve it have taken center stage in national discourse leading up to the 2016 presidential election. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many candidates made the supposedly urgent “problem of immigration” – and the intolerable presence of dangerous “illegal aliens” – central subjects of their campaigns. In “Transformation en la Frontera: Gloria Anzaldúa and the ‘Problem’ of Immigration,” I show how Anzaldúa’s texts serve as a rich theoretical resource for thinking through-and transforming-the practices of bordering that construct the “problem” of immigration in the U.S./Mexico borderlands. I explore the significant role that themes of immigration and alienness play in Gloria Anzaldúa’s throughout her corpus, from *Borderlands/La Frontera* to her recently-published manuscript *Light in the Dark/ Luz en Lo Oscuro*. In doing so, I shed light on how, in Anzaldúa’s account, immigration has emerged in the U.S./Mexico borderlands as a problem through violent practices of political, economic, gender, sexual, and racial bordering. By analyzing her work on bordering and the racialization of brown bodies, I suggest that, instead of asking what can and should be done about illegality or the “problem” presented by migration, Anzaldúa urges us to ask where and through what means these “problems” are constructed and how they might be transformed. Ultimately, by drawing on Anzaldúa’s analysis of how bordering constitutes particular subjects as illegal, I explore what can be done to transform the functions of bordering that continue to construct both illegality and the “problem” of immigration.

*Speaker