

## Question(ing) One in the Coatlicue State: A Call for Creative Engagement in the LGBTQ Movement

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There is a false separation between rhetoric and performance (Calafell; Wander). In a special issue of *Text and Performance Quarterly*, Mindy Fenske and Dustin Bradley Goltz, the editors of the issue, write, “working between and across disciplinary boundaries and distinctions, as well as within the spaces they share, is a collaborative and collective process full of possibility and danger” (1). Indeed, performance studies scholars and rhetoricians within the issue discussed how both subdisciplines criticize, invite, and produce talk about civil discourse (Wander); how race is embodied and lived in/between both discursivity and materiality (Flores); how it is time to “finally bring performance studies and rhetorical studies into regular and lasting mutuality and collaboration” (Morris 106). Given these interconnections, I follow Bernadette Marie Calafell’s lead by using a “performance lens to push back methodologically against traditional approaches in rhetoric, hoping for more complex approaches to embodiment, resistance, and cultural nuances—particularly when examining work by historically marginalized groups” (“Performance” 115). In this essay, I utilize performative writing and rhetorical criticism to place embodied performances of marriage for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans\*<sup>1</sup>, and Queer (LGBTQ) couples into greater conversation with archival texts, such as the law. To bridge the (false) gap between performance and rhetoric, I develop the Chicana feminist

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<sup>1</sup> Like Julia R. Johnson (“Cisgender”), I “use trans\*- (asterisk and hyphen) to signal gender nonconformity of all kinds and to continually foreground that gender is best understood in its interplay with other identity vectors” (p. 137).

concept of the “Coatlicue state” (kwat-LEE-kway) into a performative aesthetic that monstrosly fuses performative writing and discourse analysis.<sup>2</sup>

The Coatlicue state represents both performative writing and rhetorical analysis. Fenske and Goltz explain “performance and rhetoric are aligned, divided by lines, share lines” (1), and likewise, the Coatlicue state “can entail the juxtaposition and the transmutation of contrary forces as well as paralysis and depression” (Anzaldúa, *Reader* 320). As a first-generation and working-class Xicano<sup>3</sup> student, I have dreamed of some possibility for upward mobility for a long time, and as I look one last time at the home I shared with my husband for the past 6 years, I don’t know if I am ready to leave the state of California for my doctoral program in the state of Colorado. Why am I resisting leaving this state? I should be eager to leave, yet I feel paralyzed. What am I afraid of? Suddenly the overwhelming pull between morality and identity manifests: What will my marriage become when I leave this state?

Coatlicue is the Aztec goddess of creation and destruction, and as a metaphor for simultaneous duality and embodied contradiction, Coatlicue states are a borderlands affect grounded in ancient Mesoamerican sacred beliefs (Bost 193). By holding onto contradictions, such as rhetoric/performance and morality/identity, I enter into a state that critically examines the darkest parts of the “*self and society, self in society, and self as resistant and transformative force of society*” (emphasis in citation, Alexander 423). This Coatlicue state blends “women of color feminist theories, performative methodologies, and critical rhetoric as methodological tools” (Calafell, “Performance” 115-116) to analyze the framing strategies utilized by the LGBTQ movement and the Christian Right during the Question One vote for same-sex marriage in Maine during the 2009 election

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<sup>2</sup> Following Lisa Flores, Dreama Moon, and Thomas Nakayama’s discourse analysis of California’s Proposition 54 or the “Racial Privacy Initiative” as a model, I turn to discourse analysis as a critical and rhetorical tool to locate resistance and agency within the constrictive framings of marriage and LGBTQ politics. Flores, Moon, and Nakayama analyzed discourse in support of and opposition to the California Proposition 54 initiative to uncover strategic rhetorics within California’s political climate that also had far reaching consequences for racial discourse within the United States (182). Discourse analysis allows a rhetorician to slow down a moment and pull apart the strands of fiber that make up the fragile rope that holds society together.

<sup>3</sup> Like Cherríe Moraga explains, “I spell Xicana and Xicano (Chicana and Chicano) with an X (the Nahuatl spelling of the “ch” sound) to indicate a re-emerging política, especially among young people, grounded in Indigenous American belief systems and identities” (xxi). For a comprehensive review of the genealogical and philosophical movement from Chicana/o to Xicana/o as an identity category, please see Jennie Luna in “Building a Xicana Indígena Philosophical Base.”

cycle. Further, I issue a call for creative engagement by scholars, performers, and activists to create bridges that span the vast chasms of our differences.

With so many scholars, performers, and activists doing the rigorous and challenging work of naming difference and mobilizing resistance, I ask: who is doing the work of bridging and healing differences? Essentially, I am calling for more strategies and tactics<sup>4</sup> for the LGBTQ community and her allies that locate, invent, or resist from the Coatlicue state. Currently, the LGBTQ movement is multiply divided within—LGBT politics versus Queer politics (Slagle; Warner; Yep, Lovaas, and Elia) and White Queer politics versus Queer People of Color (QPOC) politics (Anzaldúa, *Reader*; Cohen; Johnson, “Quare”; Johnson, “Bordering”). Additionally, as “opposing movements” (Staggenborg), the LGBTQ movement and the Christian Right have been locked in a “framing strategy” of identity politics versus morality politics for decades (Miceli). Given these long-standing and entrenched political differences, this work echoes the call by Robert Cox and Christina R. Foust that social movement scholarship needs to focus on “a robust theory of efficacy or impact of rhetorical acts in oppositional struggles” (622). Utilizing the method of the Coatlicue state, I offer my own personal experiences juxtaposed alongside a case study of a public vote for or against same-sex marriage to add “new and sometimes surprising dimensions to who we are and what we ought to be doing” (Wander 100). It is by inhabiting the liminal space between rhetoric and performance and identity and morality that the Coatlicue state does the work of bridging and healing.

As a queer of color scholar and activist, I want to slow down this moment in Maine not to advocate my politics regarding marriage, but to question the frameworks of the debate that maintain heteronormative and patriarchal practices in the law and public policy. Moving back and forth from rhetoric to performance (and back) is an oft-utilized method for Latina/o communication studies scholars invested in Chicana feminisms (Calafell, “Rhetorics”), so I am sharing my lack of participation in Question One, fiscally, materially, and temporally, to purposefully move my politics into the tension-filled, contrary, and inner space of the Coatlicue state. First, I explicate my monstrous method of the Coatlicue state as utilizing performative writing and discourse analysis, specifically on the blog entries of the Question One campaign websites. Next, I briefly describe the context of the Question One vote and analyze the discourse of the Yes on 1 and No on 1 campaigns to highlight how the politics of morality

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<sup>4</sup> “Strategic rhetorics emerge from more powerful structural positions than tactical rhetorics, which focus on rearranging structures of power. While the tactical always responds to the strategic, the strategic responds to the tactical as well. This endless dialogue has implications on material conditions and arrangements of power” (Flores, Moon, & Nakayama 183).

and identity were utilized during this public vote for/against same-sex marriage. In the final sections, I remain in the Coatlicue state to offer insights from embodying marriage within a queer Xicano body, and, ultimately, I call for creative engagement within and without the LGBTQ movement to bridge the (false) gap between rhetoric and performance.

### Monstrous Methodology or The Coatlicue State

According to Aztec mythology, Coatlicue (kwat-LEE-kway), whose name means “serpent skirts,” is the earth goddess of life and death and mother of the gods. As Anzaldúa explains in *Borderlands*’ fourth chapter, Coatlicue has a horrifying appearance, with a skirt of serpents and a necklace of human skulls. (Keating and González-López 242)

The image of Coatlicue is often shocking for the viewer: “hanging from her neck is a necklace of open hands alternating with human hearts. The hands symbolize the act of giving birth; the hearts, the pain of Mother Earth giving birth to all her children” (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 69). In this article, the blood coursing through each heart chamber is a performative writing method reverberating within the Coatlicue state because “Coatlicue is not just a primordial archetype,” but she represents an ontological shift in consciousness and therefore is “a method of interpreting reality and implementing change” (Capetillo-Ponce 169). As a Xicano, I move through the world and perform my identity utilizing a non-Western epistemology and ontology towards a spiritual morality. Specifically, the mythological figure of Coatlicue and the Coatlicue state are utilized as metaphors within the Chicana/o feminist practice of spiritual activism—“spirituality for social change...that recognizes the many differences among us yet insists on [and uses] our commonalities...as catalysts for transformation” (Anzaldúa, *Reader* 323; see Facio & Lara). A Xicana/o ethical and moral compass points toward spiritual activism, and unlike morality guided by Christian dogma, “spiritual activism requires concrete actions designed to intervene in and transform existing social conditions” (Anzaldúa, *Reader* 323). By utilizing and sharing personal experience through performative writing, I am making a decolonial move “to flesh” or “to spirit” the meaning-making process of knowledge-generation (Facio & Lara), or in other words, this essay is a concrete, moral action meant to respond to an unequal social position—bridging/healing *is* my moral imperative.

The Coatlicue state is a performative writing aesthetic with a corresponding rhetorical affect that holds the moral/ethical values and beliefs of Coatlicue with my own Xicano identity position to break out of the framings strategies that have locked the discourses surrounding marriage for LGBTQ couples. Performative writing expands what constitutes disciplinary knowledge, features lived experience, believes the world is composed of multiple realities, evokes identification and empathy, practices turning the personal into the political (and

vice versa), and participates in scholarly and relational contexts (Pelias). Performative writing is evocative, metonymic, subjective, nervous, citational, and consequential (Pollock 80-95). Functioning like the counter stories of critical race theory, performative writing pushes back “against the dominant logics held within the act of writing/reading to open up possibilities for resistance and agency in the very archiving of culture” (Willink, Gutierrez-Perez, Shukri, and Stein).

One of the many divides this work attempts to bridge is the binary between the identity versus morality politics utilized by the LGBTQ movement and the Christian Right respectively. Local, state, and national elections are “rationalized through framing strategies, which rhetorically align the specific issue with larger cultural beliefs and values” (Miceli 590). These framing strategies of morality and identity repeat from state to state, local municipality to local municipality, like a broken record stuck on the same chorus. In fact, “the two factions often appear to be speaking past each other rather than truly engaging in a political dialogue” (Miceli 591). Discourses on heterosexuality and homosexuality in the belief system of the Christian Right is a rigid dichotomy of sin and un-sin that locks out other choices. The Christian Right capitalizes on the homophobia of its followers by utilizing the framing strategy that the “homosexual agenda” is seeking “to infiltrate social institutions and destroy American values and culture” (Miceli 597). The Christian Right sensing the power to excite the base and attack the LGBTQ rights movement employs moral politics regardless of the context (Miceli).

Historical opposition to the LGBTQ community and an uncompromising moral belief system blocks dialogue between these two opposing movements. Karma Chávez links the moral mentality of the Christian Right to an inherent nature vs. nurture view of sexual orientation: “Christian churches have attempted to resolve their positions by setting the parameters of ‘homosexuality’ in the binary of either biological and moral or choice and immoral” (258). This claim posits that homosexuality is only morally acceptable if there is no free will, because if there is choice than homosexuality must be a sin. Typical of dominant hegemony, the Christian Right creates the moral battleground within which LGBTQ rights groups are forced to debate. LGBTQ rights groups avoid these debates because the essentialist ground is difficult to navigate especially when trying to garner votes for resistance.

As a queer Xicano, my intersectional and interlocking identities are not divorced from my moral imperative towards spiritual activism. However, during the Question One vote in Maine, I remained on the sidelines and did nothing but occasionally observe the blog entries that arrived in my email box. Writing on communication theory, Todd Kelshaw states that “being political is not a prohibited thing, a choice, or an obligation; it is a condition. The root question is not whether we choose or have the power to behave politically, but whether we

recognize the political consequences of our minute-to-minute interactions” (161). While I focused solely on my own woes after the passage of Proposition 8 in California wondering whether or not my marriage had just been dissolved by popular vote, I forgot that our struggles are not independent from one another but always and already radically interconnected. By analyzing blog entries on the Yes on 1 and No on 1 websites and weaving my own personal experiences with marriage for LGBTQ couples, I analyze and blur the framing strategies and tactics utilized during the Question One vote in Maine on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009. In the next section, I briefly describe the context of the Question One vote in Maine and the two campaigns that took the lead for and against same-sex marriage.

### Question(ing) One

Given my intimacy with same-sex marriage, I cannot *not* include myself on this page. Although I wish I could remain within the Western logic of objective language use, how can I? You already know me, or at least, you think you do. My faceless name is always unmentioned by classrooms, media outlets, politicians, kitchen tables, and hate signs across the country and the world—so many debates happening without my voice. This is not an attempt to utilize identity politics or martyrdom to sway your opinion of this very real social issue, but my position is meant to be held in tension within this essay and this subject. It is a reminder that behind every written text there is a body performing a political act. Diana Taylor writes, “we are all in the picture, all social actors in our overlapping, coterminous, contentious dramas” (12), so while this work focuses on Question One in Maine, it is also focused on the experiences of my husband and I as we moved from California to Colorado.

On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009, Maine citizens voted to repeal a law passed through the legislature and signed into law by their governor that would have allowed same-sex couples to marry. Question One asked Maine voters, “Do you want to reject the new law that lets same-sex couples marry and allows individuals and religious groups to refuse to perform these marriages?” The final tabulation was 300,848 yes votes to 267,828 no votes ([Bureau of Corporations, Elections & Commissions](#)). One year after California’s Proposition 8 struck down same-sex marriage, proponents of same-sex marriage viewed Maine as an opportunity for a political breakthrough, and opponents of same-sex marriage saw an opening to thwart gay rights advances in the heart of the deep-blue Northeast (Burns, 2009). Stand for Marriage Maine, the Yes on 1 campaign, and Protect Maine Equality, the No on 1 campaign, spearheaded the efforts of national and local activists through new media technologies including interactive websites and blogs. At issue for the opposing campaigns was the legitimacy of an alternative sexual lifestyle in the state of Maine.

In the summer of 2012, my husband and I packed up our entire lives into our newly purchased Subaru Impreza (all-wheel drive is better for driving in the snow) for the 20-hour or 1,297 mile drive to Colorado. For the last 12 years, I had worked 1-2 jobs and taken several student loans to attend community college for an A.A. degree in general education and a B.A. and M.A. degree in communication studies. Heading to Colorado for a doctoral program at a well-reputed university was literally the dream of a working-class man come true. During my time earning a B.A., I was living in my fraternity house questioning and confused about my sexuality, and after a horrible dating experience with a male co-worker, I swung like a pendulum between dates/hook-ups with women then men then women then men. One day, this same male co-worker approached me about taking him to Splash, a local gay bar/club in San Jose, CA, and grateful for the recent positive change in our relationship, I agreed to take him, so he could meet up with his new boyfriend. I am not sure who saw who first. Multi-colored lights moved like a frenetic kaleidoscope across the dance floor playing with my eye sight, and the heavy bass reverberated in my chest. Was it the bass? Or, was it you? He was so handsome dancing and smiling with his two girlfriends. Later, I would find out that this was in fact my co-worker's new boyfriend, but in that moment, surrounded by male bodies dancing on male bodies and the smells of cologne and sweat, we saw each other. Was this fate? Did you know then that we would be together "til death do us part?"

The Maine gay marriage referendum spurred a heated and contentious local and national debate over the issue of same-sex marriage and minority rights, which placed my own lifestyle choices up for international public critique and regional public vote. As one of the 18,000 couples married before the passage of Proposition 8, this referendum on Maine's same-sex marriage legislation was personal because my wounds were still open, oozing, and dripping with confusion. The Roman Catholic Church, the National Organization for Marriage, and the Family Research Council supported the Yes on 1 campaign heavily (Burns; Goodnough, "Gay Rights"; Gagnon). The Christian Right and cultural conservatives capitalized on Maine's higher than average Catholic population and political unpredictability (i.e, a blue state with two Republican female senators, specifically Senator Olympia Snowe and Senator Susan Collins) to successfully veto a law passed by the democratic process established within this state's constitution (Gagnon). The campaign stuck to the same message used successfully during the Yes on 8 campaign in California: same-sex marriage will be taught in schools (Burns; Goodnough, "setback"). Watching the same tactics at play again months later in another state was almost unbearable to experience.

### The Last Week of the 2009 Election in Maine

The Yes on 1 campaign created an attractive website. The home page for Yes on 1 features a relaxed, welcoming blue color scheme against a fertile, green grass background (colors found prominently on the Maine state flag). The home page featured a prominent picture of an attractive, young, and smiling Caucasian male-female couple with a young girl and boy on their backs. The homepage looks professional, well-organized, and technologically savvy. The No on 1 campaign created a website that looked similar to the Yes on 1 website but delineated based on identity politics. The color scheme is a welcoming, bold green against a blue “Maine wilderness” background. The website prominently displays a photo of an attractive Caucasian male-male couple caring for a young boy with an elderly Caucasian woman sitting beside them. The picture evokes the friendly feel of an alternative family that is happy, whole, and normal. The website was organized professionally and features similar organizing webtools as the Yes on 1 website. However, unlike the Yes on 1 website, the blogs on the No on 1 website do not link to outside sources to advocate their views; the blogs are authored by No on 1 leaders. This personal touch is typical for LGBTQ rights movements because they offer the reader a chance to get comfortable with homosexuality by hearing from actual people who claim this identity. These identity politics help voters view the LGBTQ community as “normal.”

*October 30<sup>th</sup>*

The Yes on 1 campaign posted three blog entries that relied on morality politics. Each posting had a title and a short 2-3 sentence introduction to an off-site link. The link sent readers to various “letters to the editor” archives within the *Kennebec Journal Morning Sentinel*. Kennebec is the county that Augusta, the state’s capital city, is located. Gary Staples, a citizen, penned a letter to the editor titled, “Protect Marriage from the Religious Left,” urging readers to support Question One on moral grounds. He argues, “the religious left complains religion should not be used to decide the gay marriage issue. Oops! They also use specific religious beliefs and doctrines on homosexuality in their churches to help them decide how to vote.” This letter defends the usage of Christian Right moral rhetorics and attacks No on 1 advocates as hypocrites

The final two blogs of the day co-opt civil rights rhetoric to encourage supporters to follow their personal morals. In another letter to the editor link, Sean Parnell uses the 1958 Supreme Court segregation case *NAACP v. Alabama* to argue against disclosure and to highlight the passion of both movements’ supporters. He argues that disclosure is used often to demonize members of opposing movements, and Parnell evokes free speech rights to defend the moral stance of Yes on 1 supporters. Dean Clukey pens a letter that argues that the



definition of marriage should not be extended to same-sex couples because existing domestic partnership laws are more appropriate civil contracts for the LGBTQ community. He charges that the Maine legislature was too “radical.” His letter to the editor tries to engage in identity/civil rights politics, but through the conservative tone, Clukey reveals the moral basis for his argument. For Clukey, the Bible defines marriage as between a man and a woman, so any changes to the definition of marriage should not be attempted based on the moral beliefs of the Christian Right. The three blog entries on October 30th appeal to the base of the Christian Right but do not effectively engage identity politics.

### *Getting Divorced from Marriage*

As I am writing this article, I am dealing with the reality that by accepting an offer to attend a doctoral program in another state—I have in fact accepted a divorce. Moving from California to Colorado means that my body and my social contract is governed by a different text from the archive. Taylor discusses the performative relationship between the archive and the repertoire of embodied acts as “what makes an object archival is the process whereby it is selected, classified, and presented for analysis,” and “what changes over time is the value, relevance, or meaning of the archive, how the items it contains get interpreted, even embodied” (Taylor 19). Understanding the process of my political participation in Maine (and its lackings) means classifying this event within lived experiences to present how geography changes the values, privileges, and beliefs of marriage. As an archival object, these values are not static but change over time given their relevance and meaning. A move to an embodied interpretation is an attempt to highlight the changes in value, relevance, and meaning that archival objects contain within the process of selection, classification, and presentation. Even if Colorado approves same-sex marriage, the performative insight that this work offers to the archival process remains the same: State by state gains for marriage equality is not complete national or international equality for LGBTQ people.

### *November 2<sup>nd</sup>*

The No on 1 campaign, relied on similar tactics used in California’s Proposition 8 campaign but with some changes. The No on 1 campaign refused to be outspent in Maine, as in California, and was funded by a broad coalition of national and local grassroots and netroot gay rights organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign (Burns; Goodnough, “Gay rights”). The strong financial support enabled the campaign to utilize more volunteers, respond quickly to radio and television ads, and establish several field offices. Data

suggesting the overwhelming support of 18-29 year olds focused the campaign on college students and young professionals; also, the data fueled the “inevitability” argument made by gay rights activists (Smith). However, the morality politics used in the Proposition 8 campaign included fear tactics surrounding children and schools that proved effective in Maine as well.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Yes on 1 campaign released a radio ad entitled, “[Don Mendell](#).” This was the last ad released by the organization before the Question One vote, and it attacks the No on 1 campaign on moral grounds. Don Mendell is presented as a prominent, well-respected teacher once featured in a Yes on 1 television ad, and according to the radio ad, Mendell was reported to the state by same-sex marriage activists and may have his license revoked because of his views. The ad claims that this is “more evidence about how Maine schools will deal with same-sex marriage if Question One fails and homosexual marriage is legalized....don’t be fooled if Question One fails and homosexual marriage is legalized, those in power in Maine schools will push it on students” (Stand for Marriage). The message that same-sex marriage will be taught in schools was a frequent moral argument throughout the Yes on 1 campaign. This final ad was aimed at exciting the Christian Right base to mobilize them to vote. To allow children the opportunity to learn more about homosexuality is a moral impossibility to the Christian Right, and by tapping into the belief system of cultural conservatives, the Christian Right effectively inflamed the passions of its supporters to get them to the ballot box to vote.

### *Packing Boxes*

Packing boxes of my life in San Jose, California is a purposeful move to understand the nervousness of my hands as they over-taped too many boxes. Tape #1: Am I making the right decision? Tape #2: What if he hates me for taking him there? Tape #3: What about insurance? Tape #4: What if no one likes me? Tape #5: What if I fail? Surrounded by mummified cubes stacked in corners and crannies, family and friends come and go. Some help us pack and others distract us from our task. Some are crying. Some are begging us not to go. I remember being awoken one morning by one of my former groomsmen jumping onto our bed. She had used her old key to sneak in. Simultaneously, she congratulated me and hugged me, yet her voice sounded anxious and nervous. “What will I do without you?” Steeped in the Coatlicue state, I am attempting to understand these private moments because “personal experience of our emotional, spiritual, and physical states...is integral to the process of social change” (Zaytoun 207).

At our going away party, my husband’s cousin drank too much, and we had to carry her to her sister’s truck. As I sit in the backseat rubbing her back and waiting for the rest of the family to come out, she grabs my hand and with an

intense look of clarity, she shocks and surprises me: “Go over there for us. Show them what we can do.” Coming from a working-class family, I am surrounded by blue-collar workers, secretaries, servers, baristas, minimum-wage employees, and sometimes, the unemployed. Both of my parents and several family and friends have spent time in jail at multiple points in their lives for sometimes warranted and other times unwarranted reasons. Tara J. Yosso and Daniel G. Solózano report that “of the 100 Chicana and Chicano students who start at the elementary level...2 Chicana/o students will continue on to earn a graduate or professional school degree and less than 1 will receive a doctorate” (1). As I pack boxes on the hardwood floor of my former home, I am thinking of my past and future, worried about my present situation, and ruminating on the magnitude of getting a doctoral degree as a Xicano. Tears pool up as I write this, I am desperate. How can I bring my family and friends with me into scholarship? How can I not leave them behind?

*November 3<sup>rd</sup>*

Between the focus dates of October 30<sup>th</sup> to November 3<sup>rd</sup>, there are only three blog postings on the No on 1 webpage, and all the postings were published on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and were penned in order to mobilize and organize volunteers to “get out the vote.” Karin Rowland, a No on 1 spokesperson, issued a call to action. Her blog posting asks supporters to remember to vote, help make calls to Maine residents (i.e., phonebank), use Facebook to remind people to vote, and to volunteer at their local field office. She avoids making any arguments involving identity or morality politics and is concerned only with campaign business (Rowland). The use of Facebook as a social movement tool is most likely an attempt to engage the No on 1’s target audience—tech-savvy 18 to 29 year olds. Rowland is trying to mobilize a core voting bloc within the LGBTQ rights movement to overcome dominant hegemony.

Darlene Huntress, a Protect Marriage Equality Field Director and Public Policy Director for Equality Maine, posted a similar call to action but with undertones of civil rights identity politics. She asks supporters to vote, provides a link to look up local polling places, and warns that: “unless you- and your friends, family, and colleagues go vote we will lose our chance to make history” (Huntress). If Question One was defeated, it would have been the first time LGBTQ rights were defended by public referendum. Huntress is clearly marking the Question One vote as a moment of importance in the LGBTQ civil rights movement. A call to be a part of history is an effective tactic for getting out the vote, but relies on identity politics.

Finally, Matt Moonen, Director of Equality Maine, encourages No on 1 supporters to do more than vote. He quotes popular former democratic Governor Howard Dean and makes a call for volunteers to head to a field office

to phonebank until the end. Moonen, like Huntress, appeals to a bloc within the LGBTQ rights movement. Maine democrats heavily supported LGBTQ civil rights and were responsible for electing the officials who created and signed the legislation into law. To organize this important voting bloc, Moonen's posting offers a "calling script" link to help volunteers get out the vote. The calling script is rampant with identity politics. It instructs volunteers to tell their personal stories, and if the person was not planning on voting the calling script suggests the following response: "I need your help to protect my friends and family, and make sure they can get married and protect their children and partners. I'm volunteering today because this is that important to me." Attempting to mobilize the base to resist dominant hegemony with identity politics is a rampant tactic within the No on 1 campaign. However, in the case of Question One, the LGBTQ community and their allies were unable to hold back the referendum on marriage for LGBTQ couples (Davis).

#### *Facing Coatlicue*

Same-sex marriage elections across the United States have created political battlefields for hegemonic<sup>5</sup> struggle culminating in consensual votes with national campaign ramifications for both opposing movements. This has created a patchwork effect, so as legally married LGBTQ couples travel from one coast to another, they move from married to divorced to questionable to divorced to married depending on a co-constructed line on a geographic space. As I pack another box for my migration to Colorado, I'm feeling the gaze of Coatlicue: "I don't want to know, I don't want to be seen. My resistance, my refusal to know some truth about myself brings on that paralysis, depression—brings on the *Coatlicue* state" (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 70). It is about to happen. When we move through Nevada, it starts. We begin to drive extra careful because who knows what will happen if we get into an accident. "I can't confront her face to face; I must take small sips of her face through the corners of my eyes, chip away at the ice a sliver at a time" (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 70). In Utah, it is gone, and then in Wyoming, it has already been forgotten. What will it transform into when we reach Colorado? Did I do this to myself? Am I responsible? As my marriage and bodily desires move from legal to illegal, I am struggling to remain in a space of ambiguity and contradiction because the Coatlicue state is a place where "our greatest disappointments and painful experiences—if we can make meaning out of them—can lead us to becoming more of who we are" (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*

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<sup>5</sup> By hegemony, I mean the ways in which popular common sense is "understood as the unstable product of a continuous process of struggle, 'war of position,' 'reciprocal siege'" (Rupert 487-488), or domination by consent.

70). In this space or that place, I am shifting, constantly moving, holding onto my old self while adapting to my new self, and in each direction, I am torn. I am expending labor that others deemed “normal” are not, that others with heterosexual tendencies will never know, that those who choose morality and identity cannot seem to understand. It is a liminal space of possibility—a horrific image of morality and identity politics fused into one being. It is time to face Coatlicue.

### **A Politics of Interconnectedness: A Call for Creative Engagement**

It is her reluctance to cross over, to make a hole in the fence and walk across, to cross the river, to take that flying leap into the dark, that drives her to escape, that forces her into the fecund cave of her imagination where she is cradled in the arms of Coatlicue, who will never let her go. If she doesn't change her ways, she will remain a stone forever. No hay más que cambiar. (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 71).

In the case of Question One, dominant hegemony proved to be a powerfully dynamic force; however, what strategies could have (re)framed this clash of opposing movements? To influence public opinion, LGBTQ rights organizations have “minoritized” themselves and aligned their politics with civil rights and women's rights. Using these civil rights frames, the LGBTQ community has gained an edge over the Christian Right in the realm of identity politics (Miceli). Attempts made by the Christian Right to restrict the civil rights of LGBTQ citizens is generally seen as negative, and the Christian Right avoids confrontations that may be viewed as attacks on civil rights. “They have developed a commonplace—‘love the sinner, hate the sin’—to escape the charge of homophobia” (Crowley 104), and they successfully use this strategy to shift back into the sphere of morality to avoid civil rights rhetoric.

Chavez suggests articulating separate identities from variously positioned LGBTQ community members. If emphasis is given to those who do not fit the norm of Christian Right rhetoric, such as religious right leaders/members, queer people of color, bisexuals, or trans\*- persons, it may prove effective. She writes, “coalitional politics has much to offer because a group's coherence is formed precisely on the lack of coherent identity” (Chavez 268). Miceli suggests attacking the Christian Right's education agenda directly as an “effort to block inclusions in schools and the rights of gay students” (599). By engaging the Christian Right in education, LGBTQ rights activists and supporters will confront the Christian Right directly in the frame of morality, and Gay youth could prove to be a galvanizing force that may broaden the LGBTQ coalition beyond identity politics. Crowley suggests complicating and confronting the core of the Christian Right's moral agenda: “Christian conservative discourse forwards straight, coupled, monogamous marriage as the national standard for

sexual relations. Of course, the presumption that ‘a man’ and ‘a woman’ are only and always heterosexual (and are only and always male or female) covers over complexities of anatomy and gender identity that remain unaddressed by advocates of this standard, for whom a choice of sexual partner both manifests and congeals a sexual identity” (103). If LGBTQ rights activists and supporters confront the Christian Right over the complexities of anatomy and gender as a socially constructed performance, it might be an effective tool to split factions and/or disorganize the opposing movement.

As I sit in the Coatlicue state questioning this LGBTQ moment of failure, I am reminded of the interconnections between performance and rhetoric, and in this third space, I invite other scholars to question both material and discursive forms within and without social movements. As a Xicano, I occupy a marginalized and underrepresented identity in academia and communication studies in particular, and as I follow my moral compass of spiritual activism towards scholarship that makes concrete changes in the direction of social justice, I am remembering all the people I left behind in order to have a voice in this intellectual space. Often times, my identity as a queer, working-class, Xicano is deemed monstrous by those dominant power structures and interlocutors within higher education, and I find strength from other monsters who dare to produce scholarship that is both rhetorical and performative (Calafell, “Monstrous”). In many ways, I am embracing my hybridity in the very act of creatively engaging the institution of marriage, and I am calling on others to embrace their monstrosity to bridge the many (false) divides between us.

Recently, I returned to the websites utilized by the opposing movement campaigns, and I was shocked to find that many of the blog postings under analysis are no longer available to the public, and most of the letters to the editor analyzed are held deep within the archive of the newspapers who published these documents. Cut from public memory, this moment in time and space has been decapitated, and this fact again reminds me of the horror of Coatlicue’s appearance: “she has no head. In its place two spurts of blood gush up, transfiguring into enormous twin rattlesnakes facing each other, which symbolize the earth-bound character of human life” (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 69). For me, this essay is not a critique of scholarship or activism that names difference or that mobilizes people for social change. Rather I am arguing for reflection before action or radical interconnectedness<sup>6</sup> before paranoid reaction.

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<sup>6</sup> Keating (“From intersections”) describes what I call “Radical Interconnectedness” by interrogating the terms “commonalities” and “sameness” to discuss connecting through differences. Spiritual activism is a guide for her Chicana feminist ontology, so the view that “we are interrelated and interdependent—on multiple levels and in multiple ways: economically, socially, ecologically, emotionally, linguistically, physically, and spiritually” is the base of her epistemology (88). To give a clear definition of the politics that I am

It is an argument for creative engagement to set a new battlefield for the LGBTQ movement on our terms rather than those forced upon us by dominant hegemonic systems of oppression. Communication as a co-constructed process of meaning-making reminds us that we need each other in these multiple, overlapping relationships, and it helps to remember that “sexual orientation or preference is not merely about sex; there are other ways that these feelings can be expressed, some of which ‘heterosexuals’ may have even experienced” (Chavez 269). This essay is a challenge for those interested in rhetoric and/or performance studies to look for bridges to effect material and discursive change within the spaces and places of scholarship.

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advocating for, I quote her at length: “Let me emphasize: as I use the terms, ‘commonalities’ and ‘sameness’ are not synonymous. Rather, “commonalities” indicates complex points of connection that both incorporate and move beyond sameness, similarity, and difference; commonalities acknowledge and contain difference. When defined in this complex fashion, commonalities indicate one of intersectionality’s most important theoretical contributions, and the search for and invention of commonalities indicates an important methodological approach” (85).

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