

THE FORCE OF / CONTRA WITNESS / FEMINICIDE



ROSA-LINDA FREGOSO

THE
FORCE
OF
WITNESS

BUY



Irene Simmons, dress with calavera, for *Redressing Injustice* installation. Photo by author.

DUKE

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CONTRA FEMINICIDE
THE FORCE OF
WITNESS

ROSA-LINDA FREGOSO

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*In loving memory of my sister, María Teresa “Terri” Araiza
—a warrior until the end (1956–2021)*

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Prelude

We'd chant once more, the names of the dead and
bear witness again and again, deeper and deeper,
to the anguish and suffering of that terrible place.

BERNIE GLASSMAN, *Bearing Witness*

This book began as a collection of essays on the topic of femicide and disappearance on the Mexico-US border. Written over the course of ten years, each chapter attends to the necessity for remembering the horrors of femicide and disappearance, and bearing witness to its devastating suffering and spirited resistance. At the heart of this book is a reading of witnessing that encourages both/and perspectives rather than an either/or interpretation.

The force of witness is the name given to the different modalities of feminist witness discussed in these pages. Witness is not solely an individual or an autonomous subject but a constellation of multiple social locations and practices. As conceptualized here, witness is constituted by interconnections and “social relatedness.”¹ A force field of human thinking and doing, witness is multiply situated across deeply textured and heterogeneous worlds.

Rather than an individual act or practice undertaken by a sovereign subject, the force of witness involves a collectivity forged on the basis of ethical and engaged planetary obligations and interdependency.² Instead of a universalist vision, witnessing emerges from pluriversal imaginaries. Each modality, endeavor, and presence of

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witness dealt with here is context specific, “linked with and contingent on the event witnessed.” For “witnessing cannot be analyzed outside of its specific context, apart from its condition of possibility.”³ Witness affirms the dynamic, spirited connection between seen and unseen worlds.

Prior to my engagement with critical social theory related to trauma studies, memory studies, and the Holocaust, my understanding of witnessing was based on childhood memories. Growing up in a Catholic household in South Texas, I remember my parents railing against the door-to-door Christian acolytes, dressed in their Sunday best, as they knocked on doors, bearing the gift of *The Watchtower*. “Protestant fanatics,” my mother would call them. They called themselves Jehovah’s Witnesses.

My family’s weekly viewing of the *Perry Mason* TV series introduced me to another notion of the witness: the eyewitness who was called to the witness stand, raised her right hand and pronounced the oath, “I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.” For years I believed that the religious and the courtroom witness were one and the same. Interestingly, these two modalities of witnessing remain intertwined, for the legal and religious traces of witness persist to this day in Occidental thought.

In social theory, to witness is both ethereal and tangible, abstract and substantial. Each form is context specific. *Witness* is a term of law and religion, history and psychoanalysis, conscious and unconscious processes. In law, philosophy, and epistemology, the eyewitness is privileged as the purveyor of “the most decisive proof of evidence in courtrooms,” Shoshana Felman tells us.⁴ This modernist, ocular-centric notion of firsthand seeing forms the basis of a truth known and remembered by the witness in a legal or juridical context. The witness as eyewitness is also central to the discursive realm of journalism and academic disciplines that rely on firsthand knowledge through experience as evidentiary basis for news stories, factual claims, and findings.⁵ But just how reliable is the eyewitness? Does the witness testify to a truth recognizable as verifiable and factual? Or is there something unavailable as facts, inaccessible to verification, to her testimony?

“Some legal proof or the display of an object [this ‘thing’] produced in evidence” is fraught, facilitated and complicated by the vicissitudes and oscillations of memory. As Jacques Derrida suggests, “This ‘thing’ is no longer present to him, of course, in the mode of perception at the moment when the attestation happens; but it is present to him, if he alleges this presence,

as re-presented in the present of memory.”⁶ The witness’s oath is for the truth as re-membered.

In his work as a psychoanalyst with Holocaust survivors, Dori Laub points us to the psychoanalytic context of the unconscious, to the realm of she who bears witness to a truth unavailable to its own speaker. He recounts the story of a survivor-witness to the uprising at Auschwitz who testified incorrectly before historians about the events of the day that Jewish prisoners blew up “three chimneys.” The historians dismissed the woman as an unreliable witness (there was in fact only “one” chimney), yet for Laub the Auschwitz survivor bears witness to a “thing” unfamiliar: the unconscious truth and conditions of possibility of Jewish resistance. “She was testifying not simply to empirical historical facts,” Laub explains, “but to the very secret of [Jewish] survival and of resistance to extermination.”⁷ She bears witness to “agency and resistance”⁸—to something that cannot be seen, to what James Baldwin calls “evidence of things not seen.” On this basis, Kelly Oliver identifies the double sense of the term *witness*: “It is important to note that witnessing has both the juridical connotation of seeing with one’s own eyes [the eyewitness] and the religious or now political connotation of testifying to that which cannot be seen, or bearing witness.”⁹

In relation to the Holocaust experience, Laub identifies three distinct levels of witnessing: (1) “the level of being witness to oneself in the experience”; (2) “the level of being a witness to the testimony of others”; and (3) “the level of being a witness to the witnessing process.”¹⁰ In each of these instances, to witness is not an autonomous or stand-alone act but a “bonding” involving an interlocutor, a connection with (an) other: “Testimonies are not monologues,” Laub continues; “they cannot take place in solitude. The witness is talking to *somebody*: to somebody they have been waiting for a long time.”¹¹

Oliver builds on this typology and connects the witnessing process to the formation of subjectivity. Witnessing is at the core of subjectivity, according to Oliver. But rather than conceive of subjectivity as a demand for “recognition and visibility,” Oliver embraces a notion of “dis-identification” (to use José Muñoz’s term).¹² As Oliver suggests, subjectivity is “relational and formed and sustained by address-ability (the ability to address others and be addressed by them) and response-ability (the ability to respond to others and oneself).”¹³

How to build on these understandings of *witness* in critical social theory, while at the same time going beyond the implied protagonist of the witness

based on individual subjectivity? In light of the fact that in these cases, the witnessing process involves a restoration of “self-respect and a sense of one’s self as an agent or a self,” how do we contemplate its social relatedness?¹⁴ In other words, how to envision witnessing beyond the logics of law and the modern state, and as different from a category, an identity, a subject, and its embeddedness in liberalism and the autonomous individual of Western humanism? How do we imagine witnessing as a pluriversal endeavor and presence?

The witness I write about in these pages figures as a countervailing force to the necropolitics or death force that for decades has brutalized the Mexico-US border region and spread to other parts of the hemisphere. The force of witness represents a collectivity that counters this death force with life, with the vitality of a life force of human and multispecies existence, and with the demands for life. “¡VIVAS LAS QUEREMOS!/WE WANT THEM ALIVE!” the mothers and their allies in the contra-feminicide movement chanted during the protest marches of the early twenty-first century.

As a countervailing force to the destruction of life, to witness involves an embodied form of resistance and refusal to the disciplining, symbolic and material annihilation, and objectifying logic of the “feminicide machine.”¹⁵ The force of witness counters the dehumanization of women’s and feminized bodies, the extermination of poor, mestiza, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and trans people.

As an embodied form of resistance and refusal constituted by social relatedness, the force of witness affirms and maintains a pluriversal, heterogeneous stance contingent on events and circumstances. Unlike Western universalism, the theory of pluriversality opens our worldview to other possibilities for the human, ethics, and divergent imaginaries.¹⁶

Drawing from the contemplative traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism, historian and cultural critic Lata Mani considers witnessing to be a pluralistic and dynamic practice that can potentially expand our sensual engagement with the world: “Witnessing brings our attention to the inherently relational nature of existence and perception. It helps us to actively experience the fact that the world is not external to us and discontinuous to us; we discover that the world is in us and we are of it.”¹⁷

The force of witness involves a “letting go of the body as a ‘unit’” (to quote Judith Butler) and putting aside an identity-based approach to the individual subjectivity of the witness, for an “interbeing” understanding of the human.¹⁸ The subjectivity of interbeing is grounded in relations of solidarity, just as the act of bearing witness is anchored in interbeing relations.

Interbeing is an/other version of the human distinct from the self-reliant individual of Western humanism; it is a relational being: the Mayan concept of In'Laketch—"you are my other self."¹⁹

To witness under countervailing forces, then, is not solely an individual act but an expansive orientation beyond human agency and species provincialism.²⁰ The force of witness connects with the feature that Cindy Holder and Jeff Corntassel refer to as "universal kinship"—an interrelatedness of humans to all other elements of the cosmos, living and nonliving beings, in the material and spirit worlds.²¹

As members of complex kinship networks and clan affiliations, one's interrelatedness and sense of belonging entail a multiplicity of duties and obligations to the social/collective. The force of witness involves an ethics of reciprocity, a "response-ability" (to use Oliver's formulation) whereby every human being (each of us) is obliged to contemplate and regard with compassion the suffering of others. The ethical, engaged labor of pluriversal witnessing entails planetary obligations and duties to something greater than the self.

In formulating an insurgent theory of communitarian feminism, Aymara feminist Julieta Paredes posits the dialectic between the individual and the collective, defined by social kinship network—"el ser humano es relacional."²² This relational orientation of human life is central to Mesoamerican thinking of "the interconnectedness of everyone and everything in the universe, the intersubjective nature of men and women, interconnected with the earth, sky, plants, and planets."²³ Let us replace individuality with a "poetics of communality," to borrow from author and critic Cristina Rivera Garza.²⁴

In *The Restless Dead*, Rivera Garza makes use of the Mesoamerican concept of communality vis-à-vis writing and other forms of labor.²⁵ This understanding of communality entails thinking beyond oneself and abandoning the notion of the individual. Building on the work of Mixe anthropologist Floriberto Díaz, Rivera Garza details how "shared labor, material reciprocity, and a relationship of mutual belonging with the earth are basic components of survival" in Mesoamerican thinking on communality.²⁶ In the Mixe conception and experience of communality, "tequio" in particular is a "practice of reciprocity based on forms of unpaid, obligatory service labor" that "connects nature with human beings in contexts of mutual belonging that radically oppose notions of property and dominion."²⁷

For Indigenous communities throughout the Américas, claims on earth are situated in an epistemology grounded in the interconnectedness of

all beings. These accounts of the complex interdependencies that allow the human to exist are central to Indigenoussness as a worldview or way of relating to the cosmos as a living being with consciousness, including multispecies spirits who, as Susan A. Miller writes, “are real and powerful within the material world.”²⁸ In an interconnected pluriverse, anchored in collective kinship and presumptive care for all things, witnessing is a life force inseparable from our duties, obligations, and response-ability to the community of interrelated beings. Witnessing expands our comprehension of interrelatedness.

Documentary filmmaker Lourdes Portillo brings this interrelatedness to bear in *Señorita Extraviada* (see chapter 3). The documentary’s poetics at one level affirms a form of witnessing based on documenting the social suffering of feminicide and the force of resistance and agency on the part of mothers and families of the women and girls who were murdered and disappeared. At another level, witnessing in *Señorita Extraviada* is not just vision centered but multisensual, “part of a system of sensation and a space filled with the flesh of the world.”²⁹ The documentary weaves together metaphorical images (storm clouds, desert landscapes, discarded shoes) with material (eyewitness) ones, touching visuality with musicality (and not simply soundtrack), into a multisensory poetics of witnessing whereby the interconnection of the senses creates a distinct conception of vision and space.

Portillo bears witness to the witnessing process. With *Señorita Extraviada* she connects the living and the dead through scenes of singular, stand-alone testimonial of a mother followed by a montage of photos of the dead and disappeared women and girls. Her imaging strategy conjures up their spirits and in so doing anchors the act of bearing witness in inter-being relations. This appearance of the living and the dead and disappeared as interconnected in a social kinship network composed of the dialectic between the individual and the collective creates a space for intersubjectivity.

The documentary is not just a portal for the experience of witnessing trauma. Bearing witness in this sense means more than what the eyes can see, beyond an image-based process, but is grounded in a communality of kinship and care. As witnesses to the witnesses, we (viewers) are all implicated in planetary kinship obligations and duties to something greater than the self. In inscribing this communality, *Señorita Extraviada* transforms viewers into a life force of witnesses who must now bear part of the burden of responding to feminicidal atrocities and demanding justice on the borderlands.

Felman and Laub called the Holocaust “an event without a witness,” for the extermination of voices produced a “crisis of witnessing.”³⁰ As a survivor of Auschwitz, Primo Levi asserts that he cannot be “one of the true witnesses” of the Holocaust: “The only real witness, whom Levi calls the integral witness, is he who has gone to the heart of horror.”³¹ Just as one cannot bear witness from inside the Holocaust, one cannot bear witness from inside feminicide and disappearance. One can bear witness to its tribulations and militant force of action—the vulnerability, agency, embodied forms of resistance and refusal on the part of the contra-feminicide/gender violence movement.

Witnessing, then, is not simply an identity or a category but a ground for critical solidarity and transformational alliances. In *Bearing Witness While Black*, Alissa V. Richardson defines Black witnessing as a “style of protest journalism” that serves “to document the human rights injustices against black people.”³² This form of “sousveillance” or reporting from below (as opposed to “surveillance”) embodies a life force inspired by the claim to humanity: “Bearing witness while black is, after all, an act that is borne of a desire to be seen as human.”³³

In documenting the multiply overlapping struggles of the contra-feminicide movement in chapters 1 and 4, bearing witness exemplifies a potential antidote to the war on women and feminized bodies on the borderland. Just as Black witnessing makes an enduring claim “to be seen as human,” so too does feminist witnessing on the border represent a countervailing force to the necropolitical targeting, objectification, and dehumanization of poor women and girls.

Feminist border witnessing takes the form of accompaniment, an act embedded in social relatedness (see chapter 4). In their inspiring book *Insubordinate Spaces*, Barbara Tomlinson and George Lipsitz define accompaniment as “a disposition, a sensibility, and a pattern of behavior . . . a commitment based on the cultivated capacity for making connections with others, identifying with them, and helping them.”³⁴ The Latin roots of *accompaniment* “combine ‘bringing together’ (com) with ‘breaking bread’ (panis), connecting physical proximity, shared sustenance and reciprocity.”³⁵ For Tomlinson and Lipsitz, accompaniment is an endeavor and an alliance based on informal networks of solidarity. Their formulation of accompaniment differs sharply from the paternalistic logic of “protective accompaniment” that has been “popularized by human rights discourse.”³⁶

We heard their screams of personal pain and their calls for solidarity, and so many of us came from elsewhere to accompany the activist-mothers

on the border. As I detail in chapter 4, we did not come as the “unarmed bodyguards” that Mahoney and Eguren write about.³⁷ We did not come to monitor human rights violations and to protect the activist-mothers and human rights defenders, as in the paternalistic tradition of “protective accompaniment.” Those who traveled to the border from the global North, global South, and from other parts of Mexico did not come as neutral, detached, and disinterested witnesses. We came to bear witness, as committed and engaged participants. We came to accompany and connect with the activists in Ciudad Juárez, to find common ground, and unite in their struggle for social change. Bearing witness as accompaniment is a form of entering into a relationship with the other, as Aymara people would say.

With regard to the both/and (rather than either/or) interpretation of its different modalities, *witness* is a term of the legal realm (to testify; to give evidence) as much as it is of politics (obligations; response-ability) or aesthetics (utopian, artistic imaginaries). Witnessing occurs in the social, cultural, and spiritual realms, so too in the space of law and the state. Two chapters (5 and 6) deal with witnessing in the conjuncture of legalism (state-centric justice) and politics (social justice). Each of these cases—the tribunal (chapter 5) and the expert witness (chapter 6)—bears witness to individual and collective trauma, as “witness to the trauma witness.”

It is “impossible to testify from inside death,” Felman reminds us. Like the Holocaust, femicide and disappearance represent an “event-without-a-witness.”³⁸ The women murdered and disappeared may have been annihilated as witnesses; however, their mothers and advocates took their place and testified before the Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal (PPT). The mothers became speakers for the dead.

In contrast to official courtrooms, the quasi-juridical context of the PPT facilitates a space for an expanded discursive mode of witnessing, first in terms of an official, juridical mode of testifying to the facts of a historical occurrence (the details of the atrocity) and second, a personal, intimate mode of testifying to the truth of the mother/activist/witness’s own suffering, trauma, and spirited resistance. In the expanded modality of testimonial discourse, the speaker provides verbal witness to the empirical/material annihilation of the witness (dead) and to the accumulated devastation and living pain of their loved ones, who call themselves the “living dead” (see chapter 5).

The judges of the tribunal are not neutral, detached, or unconcerned observers of the witnessing process but rather engaged and resolute participants in the struggle for human rights. Characterized as an innovation in

law and politics, the PPT's vision of justice is a socially constituted one, emanating from popular consciousness, not from institutional, state-centric power. The tribunal affirms a moral and ethical obligation to the rights of people rather than a purely legalistic one. As committed and obliged witnesses to the witnesses, tribunal judges subvert the normative discourse and official context of the court of law, and in so doing affirm witnessing as a life force for the restoration of humanity and claims for social justice.

The process of witnessing within the confines of state-centric rights occurred in my role as an expert witness in gender asylum cases (see chapters 1 and 6). Here, too, the modality of "witness to the witness" opened up a space for alleviating the suffering of survivors of patriarchal violence. Rather than eschewing any association with the legal system, I learned from attorneys in gender asylum cases how to bear witness before a court of law in ways that did not compromise my feminist politics.

In petitions for gender asylum, the survivor bears witness through testimony (affidavit) to her own experience of trauma. As witness to the witness-survivor the role of the expert witness is to evaluate and attest to the veracity of the testimony and then determine the level of vulnerability (persecution) that the survivor faces if she were to return to her home country. This situation raises the paradoxical nature of bearing witness within the discursive framework of law in general and asylum petitions in particular.

The expert witness must attest to, evaluate, and interpret the testimony of the witness-survivor to trauma while simultaneously portraying the survivor as vulnerable victim. At first glance, this discursive strategy seems problematic because it appears to reinforce a paternalistic logic of passive women in need of protection, and, as Butler writes in another context, images of vulnerability and victimhood fix women "in a position of powerlessness and lack of agency."³⁹ Even so, in the ten years of working with legal teams for gender asylum, it became clear that attorneys are deploying vulnerability as a strategic concept and mobilizing it in the service of a greater political good, namely that of securing the right to existence for the petitioners and in some cases for their children. Attorneys for gender asylum witnesses-survivors cleverly addressed, engaged, and confronted the legal system and, in the process, insisted on social justice in the normative context of law and the state while they embraced an ethical response-ability to the suffering of witnesses-survivors of gender violence.

In their affidavits, the witnesses-survivors of gender violence testify with memories of pain, torture, and their abjection. The survivor thus assumes

the position that Laub terms a “witness to [her]self,” to her own experience of trauma.⁴⁰ If it is difficult for the listener (the witness of the witness) to hear or read the painful recollections, it can be even more harrowing for the survivor to recall her own experience of oppression and dehumanization. “The act of telling,” writes Dori Laub, “might itself become severely traumatizing, if the price of speaking is *re-living*; not relief, but further retraumatization.”⁴¹

It is in this context that Laub’s words provide some comfort for, as the psychoanalyst explains, through the act of testifying, survivors of atrocities reclaim their “position as a witness,” their agency as subject rather than object. As Laub suggests, “repossessing one’s life story through testimony is a form of action, of charge, which [one] has to actually pass through, in order to continue and complete the process of survival after liberation.”⁴² Bearing witness, in other words, can potentially serve to repair the inner witness, heal, and rebuild one’s humanity, self-respect, and a sense of oneself as agent. “The act of testifying restores subjectivity to the experience of objectification.”⁴³

Bearing witness to oneself or to one’s inner self is not a solo act but is constituted through interconnection and social relatedness. There is, first of all, a relationship between the witness-survivor of gender violence and her interlocutor-witness who may be a therapist, a rights advocate, an attorney, or an expert witness. The witnessing process can, in addition, potentially constitute more than a dialogic encounter between the witness and an empathetic listener, the witness to the witness. If we envision the witnessing process as a form of “tequio”—a “practice of reciprocity” or “reciprocal help”⁴⁴—then new possibilities emerge that transform the witness herself into a portal for solidarity, into a subject who avows her (our) planetary obligations and interdependency (see chapter 1).

.....

We gathered as border witnesses and participants in the political mobilization contra-femicide. Some brought their expertise in grassroots modes of organizing; others their support and shelter for survivors of gender violence. Feminist researchers contributed their scholarship; journalists observed and documented the protests; artists depicted the unbearable violence and evoked utopian imaginaries of love, abolition, and nonviolence. We all arrived to honor the dead.

Some among us are witnesses to ourselves: survivors of gender violence; artists with childhood memories of sexual assault; activists who endured

workplace harassment; males concerned about violence inflicted on their female kin. The life force of solidarity and resistance is often interconnected with one's own vulnerability, one's autobiographical encounter with the death force of violence. We came in the spirit of solidarity and communality, forging intersubjective relations that ground the act of bearing witness in human connections. The force of witness.

We are living in a world cleaved by multiple atrocities and senseless death. "We chant once more, the names of the dead and bear witness again and again, deeper and deeper, to the anguish and sorrow of that terrible place," Bernie Glassman declares.⁴⁵ We bear witness, not as a self-contained individual identity or body but as an embodied enactment of kinship obligations and response-ability to others. Multiply situated to dissolve individual subjectivity, witnessing is an act in which the body is "bound up and dependent on other bodies and networks of support."⁴⁶ We arrive as active, engaged, and committed participants in the struggle for social change. We step into someone else's footprints, walk beside them, nearby, alongside. The force of witness. Never alone.

Notes

PRELUDE

1. Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence*, 9.
2. Fregoso, "For a Pluriversal Declaration."
3. Ashuri and Pinchevski, "Witnessing as a Field," 136.
4. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 207.
5. See Ashuri and Pinchevski, "Witnessing as a Field"; Oliver, *Witnessing*, 85.
6. Derrida, "A Self-Unsealing Poetic Text," 190.
7. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 62.
8. Oliver, "Witnessing and Testimony," 84–85.
9. Oliver, "Witnessing and Testimony," 81; Oliver, *Witnessing*, 16.
10. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 75–78.
11. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 71.
12. Muñoz, *Dis-identifications*.
13. Oliver, "Witnessing and Testimony," 84; Oliver, *Witnessing*, 7.
14. Oliver, *Witnessing*, 98.
15. Sergio González Rodríguez (*The Feminicide Machine*) refers to the assemblage of structural and agential factors that coalesce in the murder and disappearance of women in Chihuahua as the "feminicide machine."
16. For more about the theory of pluriversality, see Esteva and Prakash, *Grassroots Postmodernism*; and Mignolo, *The Darker Side*. In an earlier essay, I explored ideas regarding pluriversality, witnessing, and interbeing understandings of the

“human.” See my essay, “For a Pluriversal Declaration of Human Rights” (2014).

17. Mani, *The Integral Nature*, 116.

18. Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence*, 45. I borrow the concept of interbeing from the Buddhist thinker Thich Nhat Hanh; see also Lata Mani’s use of the concept in her *Myriad Intimacies*.

19. For a critique of the masculinist use of the concept by Chicano cultural nationalists, see Fregoso, *The Bronze Screen*; for a feminist reading of In’Laketch, see Pérez, *Chicana Art*.

20. See Connolly, *A World of Becoming*.

21. Holder and Corntassel, “Indigenous Peoples,” 147.

22. Paredes, *Hilando Fino*, 30–31.

23. Marcos, “The Borders Within,” 93.

24. Rivera Garza, *The Restless Dead*, 52.

25. Borrowing from the practices of the Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois federation, John Brown Childs (*Transcommunalism*) develops the concept of “transcommunalism” as a way of thinking about communities as coalitions.

26. Rivera Garza, *The Restless Dead*, 47.

27. Rivera Garza, *The Restless Dead*, 47–50.

28. Miller, “Native America Writes Back,” 10.

29. Quoted by Oliver, who discusses Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s “vision-touch system” in *Witnessing*, 201.

30. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 80–82.

31. Cavareno, *Horrorism*, 34.

32. Richardson, *Bearing Witness*, 197.

33. Richardson, *Bearing Witness*, 180.

34. Tomlinson and Lipsitz, *Insubordinate Spaces*, 23.

35. Tomlinson and Lipsitz, *Insubordinate Spaces*, 26.

36. Butler, “Introduction,” 9.

37. Mahoney and Eguren, *Unarmed Bodyguards*.

38. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 231, 237.

39. Butler, “Introduction,” 22.

40. Laub uses the term “witness to oneself” and “witness to himself,” which I’ve adapted here; see Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 75–85.

41. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 67.

42. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 85.
43. Oliver, *Witnessing*, 98.
44. Rivera Garza, *The Restless Dead*, 50.
45. Founder of the Zen Peacemaker Order, Glassman makes this statement in the context of the horrorism at Auschwitz in *Bearing Witness*, 33.
46. Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability," 16.

CHAPTER 1: CHRONICLES OF WITNESS

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1. "Esmeralda Garza" is a pseudonym. For safety reasons, this and other names throughout this book have been changed.
2. See Fregoso, "Voices without an Echo."
3. Nathan, "Death Comes to the Maquilas."
4. The 8 de Marzo organization was formed in the 1990s to advocate for domestic violence legislation and to support reproductive rights for women in Mexico. Casa Amiga, under the direction of Esther Chávez Cano (also founder of the Grupo Feminista 8 de Marzo, was the first organization to document the feminicides. See Ravelo Blancas, *Miradas Etnológicas*; Wright, "Necropolitics."
5. "Clara Vega" is a pseudonym.
6. Jorge Ramos is a Mexican journalist with Spanish-language media. Quoted in Ramos, *Stranger*, 167.
7. Monárrez Fragoso, "La cultura de feminicidio," 97.
8. Bejarano, "Las Super Madres," 135.
9. My translation of "Muchas de las mujeres asesinadas trabajaban entre semana de obrearas y los fines de semana como prostitutas para hacerce mayores recursos"; "Visitaba un centro en el que se dan cita homosexuales y lesbianas"; "Le gustaba salir con diferentes hombres y era asidua asistente de salones de baile." Quoted in Benítez et al., *El Silencio que la Voz*, 36.
10. My translation of "¡NO SON PROSTITUTAS; NO SON ESTADISTICAS; PERO SI TIENEN HISTORIAS!" See Fregoso, "Voices without an Echo," 148.
11. See chapter "Toward a Planetary Civil Society," in Fregoso, *MeXicana Encounters*.