

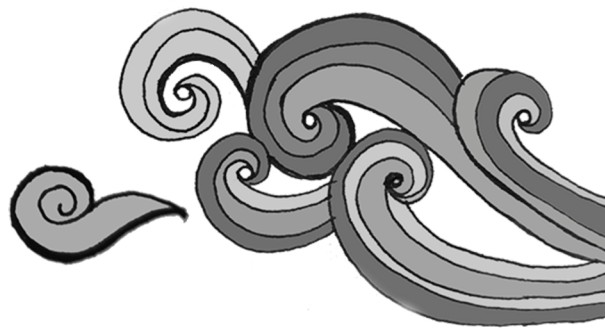


FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS

VOICES AND EXPERIENCES FROM COMMUNITY RADIO



Feelings and Thoughts.
Voices and experiences from community radio



Oaxacan Women's Radio Platform

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First Edition: September 2014

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Printing by El Castor. Productos Gráficos

This book was made possible with the financial support of:

International Indigenous Women's Fund (FIMI)

strategic program,

The Indigenous Women's Fund AYNÍ

www.fimi-iiwf.org



Channel Foundation

www.channelfoundation.org



And the support of

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Comunicación Indígena S.C.

(Ojo de Agua Comunicación)

<http://ojodeaguacomunicacion.org/>



First Edition

Oaxaca, México

September, 2014



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Acknowledgement

We would like to thank all of the women and men that have believed in this dream, that through collective effort, has been made reality

The following people have accompanied us on the journey: Carolina Vásquez, Mayte Ibarguengoitia, Clara Morales, Zenaida Perez, Aline Castellanos, Anamaria Hernandez. We are grateful for their words of support and advice, but above all their complicit spirit of sisterhood. And to all of the other women that are our mothers, sisters, friends, and *compañeras* in this path with sound, words, and music and that have moved our hearts.

We would also like thank our friends and allies that made this book possible: Pauline Rosen-Cros, Alejandra Canseco, Ruth Orozco, and Miriam Taylor and Peter Bloom who with their images, designs, translation, and proofreading gave form and color to our words.

Additionally, each one of us would like to thank her town, her community, her family; as well as the different communication projects where we've each grown, where we were trained, and where we've gained experience and love for community media and especially for radio. Thanks for the support and for walking with us on this journey. Today, all of us strive for a common dream: we want to do what we enjoy and make a living from what we do, and want to encourage other voices to build their own dreams.

This book is written in two languages, Spanish and English, as a way to share with the *compañeras* of the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI), who through the strategic program Indigenous Women's Fund AYNÍ, have helped strengthen this initiative with their support; we hope that later translations can also be made in the languages that are spoken in our communities.

Finally we thank you, the one reading this, who perhaps in some moment has heard our voice or a sound generated by us; thank you for motivating us to continue building the dreams that are now beginning to be a reality. We hope that when you close this book you begin to tell the stories of your life that blossom from your being.

Plataforma de Mujeres Radialistas de Oaxaca



Foreword

The Oaxacan Women's Radio Platform: a sisterhood of women

Esenting the experiences of these intelligent and beautiful women, who are both fighters and dreamers. Women who have struggled against the customs that wound and oppress, and who are capable of changing their own lives. Women who are convinced that their wings will open and that collectivism will cover them with respect, is a pleasure and an honor for me for which I give thanks, harmony and blessings to them.

The proposal for writing this text came into my life at the moment when I was in search of my identity as a Oaxacan, as a woman at an age of transition, and building myself as a communicator and healer using words. Which is to say, as a believer in the radio, in radio production, and the artistry of sound as therapeutic tools, as much for those who make them as for those who listen to them.

Coming together, listening to one another, vibrating with joys and sadness, sharing silence, words, and food, creating a circle where no one knows more than the rest and where respect, imagination and curiosity form a community scarf that drives away fear, loneliness, and hopelessness. This is how I think of what Loreto, Dalia, Estrella, Griselda, Maricruz, Magdalena, Eva, Zaira, Keyla, Alejandra and Niz are building.

There are many elements that these women have in common that enable them to call themselves women in radio: they undertake challenges and confront them with bravery, but also with doubts. They feel they still lack experience, that the techical aspects are not their specialty, and that they are lacking the equipment to do their work (consoles, editing software, high-quality recording devices). To me they are a group of warrior women of word and sound.

In the following texts of these women, there are narrations that make us realize that writing, recording and doing postproduction in an indigenous language is a huge challenge that requires tenacity, patience, and creativity. Each one, in her own way and from her own space, topples myths, stereotypes and rumors. They adopt a perspective of gender that carries them to build different realities for themselves and the women that hear and watch them.

Together they have decided to take a path, each walking it differently, not in single file: each one at her own rhythm and with her own route. They advance according to what they enjoy doing and who they like doing it with, always creating collectivity.

The interesting thing is that they are always asking questions of themselves, and by asking they find different truths and different paths. It is walking with firm but cautious steps, with eyes and ears completely open. Their minds and hearts are in a continuous and profound dialogue.

For these women, radio fuses together desires and shapes collective dreams using words. Following what their hearts tell them has brought them to “discover their own abilities.” Their differences complement the common knowledge. The understanding, emotions, feelings, and creative power that each one gives to the others makes up the strength of the whole.

There are compañeras that have developed amazing skills: those that have confronted their families, those who know magic secrets to make themselves visible or invisible in front of others, according to what the circumstances require. Those who use words as singular tools in the work, one who has discovered her “gift” as a leader, those that with production experience in their native languages have gained confidence, and those who worry about the security of communication and freedom of expression. There are those for whom working in radio has meant the beginning of a fascinating journey of self-recognition and learning to listen to oneself. Those who with their recorder visit the sound landscapes of life.

The time has come for Oaxacan women to reunite, because it's only with the strength we have together that we can protect ourselves with the ferocity that we imagine and desire: and with the help of radio, put an end to the violence that begets more violence within communities and families, a violence that is carried out indiscriminately against women and children. Our dream is to build with firmness, conviction and with the help of radio, a lasting culture of peace.

Mayte Ibargüengoitia González





To My Voice

My voice has accompanied me with each step
when I decided to put it away
to maintain the complicit silences of my being.
When I put it in front of a microphone
my voice led me by the hand and I crossed mountains
I learned to love it and others made a place for me.
My voice has been a banner made of many stories
It has been a girl, mother, grandmother, panther, monkey, tree...
it has been me.
My voice will leave and I will let it go
Tomorrow, when it is necessary to remember it
It will have to be searched for in the vibration of my new vocal chords.
My voice will be the tuning fork that guides
that other form to feel the world.

Niz Vásquez Cerero





To My Voice

Sharing My Life



My name is Dalia and I come from a Zapotec community in the Central Valleys of Oaxaca called San Juan Guelavia. The Oaxacan Women's Radio Platform that we've begun weaving is generating fruit; proof of this is the possibility to disseminate our experience and our voices. Because of this and with great pleasure I will share with all of you some of the things I've lived through as a woman and as a woman working in radio that have strengthened my work.

Some of the first resonant encounters that cemented my aspirations were the songs from the CD *These are my people*, a music project put together by the civil association *The Oaxaca Coalition of Teachers and Indigenous Promoters* along with Jaime Martínez Luna. Using their positions, they began to build an alternative education that would respond to the conditions and needs of the children, youth and the community. The melodies of that musical material invited a recognition and re-valuing of the rural contexts and the daily lives of the people in the town.

From those auditory images my spirit was moved toward channels where I could express myself; spoken word and poetry as school exercises were my first resources. Afterward, and thanks to the support of my parents, getting a degree in communication became a reality. However, much of what we saw in school was very far from the real social conditions where communication takes place in Oaxaca.

Guelatao de Juárez was the place that, after finishing my studies, opened doors for me to know and live the work of community radio. This effort was a result of the defense of the forests efforts that for 80 years had generated important territorial and communications movements in the region, but, like in other contexts, did not have the support or public funding that allowed them to strengthen themselves. During those years, the community radio stations didn't even exist under the law.

Now, ironically, we have a new set of laws that do recognize the term "community radio," but that impose severe limitations both in terms of content and spectrum, as well as in access to economic resources. In this sense, the work I did in Guelatao changed my path; in order for the project to survive, we needed not just a desire to create communication, but also the ability to do so knowing that there weren't economic resources that would cover food, housing, or even recording equipment or

basic production equipment for creating programming. Even with these limitations, the experience was a rich one, working alongside El Tiburón Mágico (The Magic Shark), Don Jaime, Dan Javish, Don Luis, Doña Bety. Learning about and communicating life through radio was very enjoyable.

The language and the radio genres were created using the experience of some and the imagination of others. El Tiburón Mágico and his helicopter was the radio creation that I most enjoyed in the region, Don Beto and Don Javi created it using a pair of walkie-talkies and the helicopter sound effect. The story involved rising to heights using imagination and describing nearby communities and the activities that people were doing early in the morning. One day, the impact was such that the local police arrived and urgently asked us to go with them because there was group of soldiers positioned at the intersection of San Juan Chicomezuchil monitoring the helicopter that had been announced on the radio, and they were wanted to know where the unidentified object landed, and who had given it authorization. We couldn't believe the situation and that, just like the narration that Orson Welles did of the book *The War of the Worlds*, the soldiers in the mountains thought that we were being invaded not by aliens but by a magic shark riding in his helicopter. This and other stories made it an extraordinarily creative workspace; however, over time the health of our great personalities began to decline and the lack of technical and economic resources began to worsen. For my part, the pressure of being able to count on a job that would allow me to professionalize my work made it so I had to move on; my time in that place had come to an end.

I changed direction, this time to an institutional setting that allowed me to explore and receive training in radio production. Words, sound effects, music and silence were the basic ingredients, but were necessarily complemented with imagination, training in editing programs, and acoustic data. During this period, my skills in the technical realm were strengthened somewhat, but in the personal sphere there was a great void due to the limited objectives that the programs and financing entities imposed on those in charge of the project. The radio productions that they wanted to disseminate to indigenous communities were limited to superficial content that didn't get to the bottom of the deep problems in terms of human rights and collective rights. At that time, Oaxaca was a breeding ground for resistance movements. But radio production had to be conceived and carried out in a particular way depending on which international organi

zations the coordinators were beholden to. It was infuriating that such a place had been designed and equipped with all this acoustic precision. The editing and production equipment was of the highest quality, the library of music and effects came in their original cases; it was the ideal infrastructure for any community radio, which continue to have less than the basics. In conclusion, we had basically everything in terms of radio production, but without the possibility to honestly express our thoughts.

When the project finished I decided to change horizons, this time completely. At that time a distance learning teaching position was available that my father had vacated when he retired and could thus pass on to me. I knew that this process was highly criticized, and for good reason. However, at that time another part of me wanted to understand firsthand the interwoven realities of the job. It wasn't easy to adapt to everyone's continual questioning; I felt that I had betrayed myself, that I had left doing what I enjoyed in order to gain job security. At first, and to alleviate my constant frustrations, I started to work with mini-workshops at the school radio. The idea was to create small productions with themes drawing on the concerns and desires of young people, organizing them into teams and trying to get all of them to participate in the process. From these experiments came stories, plays, and educational bulletins that allowed us to exchange the diverse ways of listening to our realities. This was how I slowly integrated my communications work into the realm of teaching.

That year my outlook on work changed, and I returned to the medium of radio. The Oaxacan Teachers' Trade Union issued an announcement inviting all teachers of basic education to join the Center for Social Communication of the Section 22 Teachers' Union, an area which also has a radio station called Radio Plantón (Protest Radio). It was this station that played an important role in 2006 in the defense of the collective rights of different social sectors. After an act of repression on the part of the state government, the group raised awareness, organized themselves, and confronted with great decisiveness an authoritarian government that, unfortunately, in the end was sheltered by federal structures. Today, with even greater malice, the government is imposing structural reforms that clearly violate our rights, social protections, and allow for the plundering of our territory.

After these events, Radio Plantón's strength began to diminish due to internal divisions, ideological discrepancies, the self-importance of some members, and the macabre political games being played by the government, and they'd lost their way with the radio station. However, from my perspective all was not lost. The bill that the state legislature had presented a few months beforehand to local legislators brought to the table advanced approaches regarding the recognition and rights of our indigenous towns, including having our own media outlets.

In this sense, Radio Platform is for me a space for collective orientation that allows me to strengthen ideas and proposals about the process I find myself in now. As women, we swim against the current; workplace harassment, authoritarianism, lack of project perspective on the part of our immediate supervisors and the indifference toward the possible reach of radio in the educational field, make this path very difficult. But I don't feel alone, I don't get discouraged, actually it's the opposite, I know that by accompanying one another we will open a range of possibilities that will undoubtedly move us toward appreciating, loving, and respecting one another, as well as professionalizing our work. Thanks for being here, sisters in life.

Dalia Iraís Morales García



Producing in Two Languages





Voces en Zapoteco

Abraham Méndez Méndez / Amaratón López Chinoz / Artalejo
 Anaí Salvador Méndez / Bryan Saldaña López / Cornelio
 Hernández Pérez / Daniel Méndez Morales / Edgar Méndez
 Méndez / Eva López Chinoz / Héctor Santiago Barrios
 / Is-chal López Martínez / José Manuel García Santiago /
 Margarita Ramírez Velasco / Miguel Ángel Méndez Méndez /
 Nancalá / Martínez Santiago / Noemí Hernández Martínez
 / Ocho Pablo Pacheco / Olegario Raelito López / Olegario
 Martínez Chinoz / Tania Hiel Pérez Hernández / Veneranda
 Cruz Luna / Zaida Martínez López / Zaida Mihé Hipólito López

Voces en Castellan

Adriana López Jiménez / Alfredo Viquez Viquez / Amadeo
 López Chinoz / Benjamín Saldaña López / Cythlariel Corona Calvo
 / Dehail Viquez Corona / Eva López Chinoz / Raúl Cerezo
 Calvo / Lucio Corona Andújar / Judith Rosalva Pérez / Mónica
 Corona Andújar / Naim Martínez López / Nicanor Viquez
 Corona / Olegario Raelito López / Olegario Martínez Chinoz
 / Ramon Hernández Corona / Noveranda Cruz Luna / Vladimir
 González Pacheco / Natus Saldaña López / Ysaciel Hernández
 Blas / Yohani Saldaña López / Zaida Mihé Hipólito López

Producción: Zaida Mihé Hipólito López y Nicanor
 Viquez Corona
Edición: Nicanor Viquez Corona y Zaida Mihé Hipólito
 López
Artística: Nicanor Viquez Corona
Traducción: Ana María Chinoz / Amaratón López Chinoz,
 Zaida Mihé Hipólito López y alumnos y alumnas de la
 Secundaria Comunitaria de Santa María Zoquiote,
 Tlaxiote, Dehail Viquez Corona.

Agencia promotora: Equo Latam
 -Al Programa de comunicaciones indígenas
 -A la Unión de organizaciones de la zona huetar M.C.
 -A los profesores y alumnas de la secundaria Comunitaria de Santa María Zoquiote.
 -A los campesinos y alumnas de las escuelas de educación superior, Santa María Zoquiote, Tlaxiote y Villa de Guadalupe en el Estado
 de Oaxaca.
 * Por respeto a todos las personas que de forma voluntaria o no voluntaria, hicieron posible este proyecto.

Contenido

1. *Abstracción alimentaria*
2. *Alpaca y volcánica alimentaria*
3. *Resumen natural y volcánica alimentaria*
4. *Plantas tradicionales de comida*
5. *Redes colectivas y volcánica alimentaria*

Resistencia culturalmente libre, viva el color y el sabor

Sembrando Autonomía
Una tarea de todos y todas

When I was a girl I imagined that the person that gave the time in the radio station that could be heard in my community lived at the station and that they must have had to do everything quickly so that they didn't miss the quarter-hour mark when the time was solemnly announced without errors. Years later, I discovered that the magic of the radio was in making people believe that you're there, be it in real time or through a previously recorded piece.

My first time on radio was when I participated in a radio soap opera, doing the transcription for the translation to Zapotec, and doing a few of the voices for the different personalities. Years later I began to do radio (in a community, clearly), but later without the slightest idea of the implications of radio production, I got the idea to produce a show, and not just that, but tried to do it in two languages, let's just say I stepped in it (fortunately, of course!).

First, I began with the challenge of writing the project, those basic things that communication theorists do, that for someone like me without that training required more effort. I decided on the format, the length, the different parts, the content, the characters and all of this I learned along the way, all the while thinking, "why in hell don't I give this idea and all of this to someone that has more experience? And now I leave you to suffer!" But stubbornness motivated me again.

In a second moment, I'm sure you already know... How does one make a production a reality? Getting the technical equipment, starting with the most essential: the microphones and headphones, to the most sophisticated: the console, the editing software, and a long et cetera of things that can't be found everywhere. But my male friends let me borrow what they had and what they could, I say male because I realized that it was men who possessed the majority of the technical equipment, by comparison women had very little, and if there was one who had some, she certainly was not Oaxacan. All of this means always have to adjust one's schedule and times. On the other hand, doing interviews with male and female experts on the topic in order to design the content: it's here where the creative process begins, although for me that is still not a reality since I only thought about how to build and transmit ideas in an interesting and enjoyable way for the audience. With the rest of the materials and the

music, the most stressful part for me, was assuming that there were no women producing and even less in two languages or at least I didn't know them... and the worst part: I didn't have them close by.

For the moment of production, my and friends and I designed the programs in such a way that we needed over sixty different voices, and I thought of the friends, enemies, family members, in other words "the crew," that was always ready to collaborate, that could help in the journey that I'd committed to. And that's how it went, and fortunately they did a great job. The secret is that all us have a repro-activa Mom and some talkative aunts, and with a small budget this was the moment to take advantage of everyone's abilities. They know a lot of people and when we realized it, the lady from the store, the one who sells tamales, the man who sells atole and corn on the cob in the neighborhood, found themselves in front of a microphone as a character. It is also necessary to give friends a hand, beyond just your partner's family, the more people that participate, the better. However, since they weren't actors and didn't know how to use their voices (neither did I), we did a few practice runs and then went to recording cold; I must confess that in some sessions there was mezcal and wine to ease the embarrassment.

The version in Spanish was recorded in a closet that we improvised to use as a sound booth, we used a small light to avoid interference. This we achieved with lots of blankets, the super-thick ones that grandmas use and that are excellent for helping with background noise.

Soon a private room had been converted into a radio production center with equipment, blankets, broomsticks (that work as a base, place to roll cables, curtain rod, etc.), cups, cables, books, containers everywhere, while the family walked outside on tiptoes without making noise, because if they didn't they'd have to deal with our shouting and scolding. They became so used to "shhhhhh" that it became a part of our vocabulary during those days, all of this made them anxious to get their house back.

I haven't told you anything new, maybe this has happened to those that work in radio, but the good part came when we were going to do the production in Zapotec. I talked to a few contacts to do recordings with some youth and my friends and I head to do the recording, we got there with our scripts and everything. The teenagers were thrilled with the idea, and expected that they'd have to do something, but...now what?

We had to start with the scripts, and yes, in that moment look one another in the eye, but... how were we going to do the translations with people who couldn't read or write Zapotec? We know how to speak it but not necessarily how to write it, it's true! But fortunately the teachers, (yes, those from the Section 22 Teachers' Union) helped us put together a short workshop to learn the alphabet and sentence structure in Zapotec.

Afterward, each group worked on translating a script, taking care to express the same thing in Spanish and Zapotec, the part that was most difficult was the poetry. Curiously, the translations were more poetic in Zapotec than in Spanish (I'm not saying that because it's superior, but I do think that the element of symbolism and the composition made it so that once it was expressed again in Spanish it said something different), upon reading them again we didn't know if they were the creation of the author or a collective one.

Once we got through the translation, transcription, and the rest, we found ourselves confronting that challenge of recording. Those who have been in radio a long time will say that there's no challenge in this, but for me there was. Maybe it was due to the fact that I was a novice or because I simply didn't know how to do it, but... when the time came to record, we should have thought about whether the voices corresponded to the characters, if we could get the kids to transmit emotion in Zapotec with all that implies, I'm not saying that emotions are experienced differently, but I swear that on the Goddesses that it is expressed differently. Once this turned out, we realized that now we had to practice the readings! How do you read fluidly in Zapotec when that is not a common practice for us? Well, there also aren't thousands of books or materials available in our language, right? So... we were left with no option but to give ourselves time to practice and rehearse until all of us enjoyed saying our lines. For that, more than one person was in charged of recording, so without a doubt that phase was a collective one.

The challenge of recording in Zapotec good worse, in the community there are not ideal conditions for doing it, so we ended up moving into a couple of houses and a few classrooms with blankets, furniture, backpacks, and book, and all that enabled us to cancel the ambient noise, and that was how we did it again, but now in the voice recordings there was ano-

ther thing to consider, the bad pronunciation in Zapotec led to different meanings, like lachha (I'm craving) and lachha (walk in whatever way you can), they're written the same, but the pronunciation and the context can cause bursts of laughter, imagine "I'm craving your bedsheets" or saying "undo however you can your sheets," neither of those sentences were what we wanted to record, I should point out that I picked the lightest version, but I'll just tell you that those were sessions of unending laughter because of the terrible pronunciation.

Recording with kids was also complicated, doing it in Spanish seemed simpler because they imitated what you said and ready to go, but doing it in Zapotec, imitating and transmit intention is not so easy, watching them get frustrated, watching myself get frustrated, almost made me want to throw all the equipment at the wall, but I couldn't have that luxury. But I should point out that afterward, listening to their voices, their laughter on the postproduction audio made me feel an incredible sense of magic, that them being able to tell their stories of making radio, made every minute worth the trouble in order to continue with production.

That's how the days passed, recording and re-recording, with a ton of audios for each character, it was work that I thought would never end, until the editing moment arrived, in Spanish it was easy to find people to help, but in Zapotec I had to do it, I learned to edit with a sophisticated program while building the dialogues and the program, we don't know if it was during the day or at night, during the week of Christmas and New Years we were in front of the computer with the waves on the screen, cutting and pasting all the time, by the end of the vacation and we were building the background sound when another firework went off, with some audio clips on line and others pre-recorded by my friends and I.

Ultimately, we were able to do five programs in Spanish, five in Zapotec, and a CD with a cute cover designed by a good friend of mine, with the corresponding credits and the necessary authorization for reproduction. When we had it in our hands it was phenomenal to remember that woman that said the time on the radio when I was a girl, but even more exciting to listen to the people of my community asking about the characters and to see other kids happy because they'd heard their voice on the regional radio station, while other people asked the characters if they still planted, harvested, or san, because that's what they'd heard on the radio. The production got to such a place in the community that there is a boy whose

nickname is the name of the character he played in the production. I firmly believe that that is the magic of the radio that continues to fascinate, intrigue, and hypnotize me.

Aly Xidza





Fortifying Comunalidad¹ Through Radio

Why another radio station?

That's how Ángel García, since deceased, responded to us almost fifteen years ago. "To have our own possibility." And I go all in on that possibility in May 2009. For the then Communal Stereo, as a project of the Comunalidad Foundation it was transmitted with 300 watts of power and had serious administrative problems. From my house I could hear the station, and I reflected on the programming and the production that those passionate people working in radio had done, and thought that it was a lot of work to just have it archived.

Radio should go beyond regional music groups or bands. I started with 94.1 FM with that conviction and found myself in almost impenetrable technological world, which meant a new adventure in my life. That station, xhgz, had accumulated a lot of debt, and it was thanks to the efforts of many friends that I didn't get overworked on the project.

That's how I began the work of income vs. expenditures, necessities, utilities-- a routine that with persistence and responsibility in order to maintain economic stability that its necessary in order to keep transmitting for thirteen hours a day. Completing the projects with their respective reports made it an exhausting dynamic for the station's founders. But in the region of the Northern Sierra Mountains, in the district of Ixtlán, the economy is not as fluid as we'd like it to be in order to keep up dignified incomes for those that work in radio. Because of this we confronted ups and downs, good months and precarious ones, which meant having to constantly be thinking about what to do, which activities could generate income.

The families of Ixtlán and other communities that have small businesses, and those that sell products or offer a service such as a dentist office or a pharmacy think of the radio as their medium for disseminating information and in that sense they value it, which allows for mutual support, solidarity and also means reflecting, promoting and even diagnosing there regional economy from the radio.

Following the technological path of radio means overcoming fears and traumas in relation to the technical aspects that are mastered more spontaneously by other compañeros. It wasn't just getting in front of the microphone but also the computer and what it meant and contained, the world of the internet and of course discovering all its goodness.

Meeting Sarita, as we lovingly call her, getting to know the creative interconnectedness that we were able to make from this program opened for many people enormous possibilities, even the ability to rest while Saria worked. Creating programming having known the program was for me a great thrill and enjoyable task. Combining music-bulletin-spots-interventions live made it so Communal Stereo transmitting on 94.1 sounded like radio, like a radio station that for almost 15 years has been thinking about how to make radio even more attractive and relevant for the communities where the signal reaches.

The world of radio production continues to be the biggest challenge and even more so if we are convinced that what we are doing should be part of and reflect the reality of the communities themselves, "that which we call comunidad," as teacher Jaime Luna would say. The efforts of the communities to maintain their colors, smells, flavors, and no-flavors Serano-Zapotec-Mixe-Chinanteco.

There are dozens of anecdotes that have come up from this experience that have allowed me to grow as a human being: when I find myself sharing the knowledge I've gained with young people that come to do their volunteer service, when I see children having fun and learning and enjoying using the microphone as if it were a new toy, telling their jokes, giving shout-outs to their families, I think that the instrument-process is worth the effort.

Once a woman from the community of Ixtlán died and a family member called so that we could play "God never dies" (a song which has become the state hymn of Oaxaca, in large part because the communities use it during sad times.) Days later I found out that when the song began to play they put the radio up to the woman's body. This shook me and made it so that I could feel and measure what this instrument meant for the people. It's not just about economic possibilities, it is also spiritual, it's about their beliefs beyond technology and our limitations.

Slowly we have become trained in the work of creating radio, and this exchange of experiences with others has been vital. A network of women in radio has been woven to protect and train us. Through the Oaxacan Women's Radio Platform we've had access to other experiences that have nourished the processes of Communal Stereo, training needs have been met and criteria established for our programmatic bar and ability to build policies that strengthen and assure the continuity of community radio stations and this is good because that's how we grow as a project that uses radio as a tool so that communities continue growing and building their own vision of life.

Maria Magdalena Andrade



Sound Tasting



The old men say that we the Ñu Savii are men of women of the clouds. My sky is painted with the colors of the High Mixteca in Oaxaca and my roots reach further and further until they reach Mexico City, the place where I grew up and got my professional training. My generation lived through times of resistance, for example, the strike against the fee hike at the National Autonomous University of Mexico in 1999; it was in that context that I learned the practice of popular communication with the information brigades on the metro, the newspaper murals, the plays in the neighborhoods, the banners over bridges.

An important step for the General Strike Advisory Board was the creation of modes of communication and free radios in order to bring the campaign back from the smear campaign that was directed at students that participated in the strike. There's no doubt that those were times of learning and of taking a stand for what we later decided to do: become women working in radio.

Between necessity and desire, we tried to make the way as bearable as we could, with a particular taste for this work that we'd decided to undertake. So over eight years ago I began accompanying different community radio stations in Mexico, giving training workshops on different genres and radio formats, I specifically liked to do reporting on social issues. In 2006, I covered the citizen and teacher mobilizations calling for the removal of Oaxaca's governor. It turned out that work became the radio report called "The Foundation of Memory," which got first place in the reporting category in the 7th Biennial of International Radio. Afterward, a book was published about the events of the resistance in Atenco with testimonies of the repression from the public's perspective by the Federal Preventative Police in May of 2006.

After these projects were completed, a sort of emotional exhaustion came over me for having covered situations of social conflict and as a result my heart moved to other genres not just in terms of writing but also in radio, like the project Radio Art and in particular Sound Landscapes; these—I say this undeterred—have saved me from insanity and opened doors so that sensitivity flourished through more imaginative causes.

I remember that a few years ago, I cleaned my ears and paid attention to the universe of sound, I heard the ants taking bites of the leaves, I

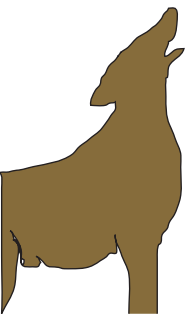
paid attention to the different tonalities in metal when it was struck, I experienced sound travelling through my bones; I put my ear against my knee while a tuning fork vibrated at my foot, I closed my eyes and could distinguish levels of sound and their ecolocation, I put into practice constructing stories without a narrator.

In terms of my personal and professional life, sound is fundamental, and because of this I try to share it in the different spaces I find myself in, I know that when one listens consciously to the sounds around them, it can change one's life. This might sound presumptuous, but I've proved it in workshops about sound sensitivity, when I ask about sounds the participants like best, memories of the cart of sweet potatoes on a cloudy afternoon come to them, or of walking while holding their parent's hand in the mountains or of the screeching of monkeys, or the silence that exists between earth and sky (like a young man from the Mazateca Ravine told me).

As a woman working in radio, I haven't stopped doing sound production with social content, but I think it is the combination of two genres, radio art and reporting, where I can make it so that from surprise and imagination conscious listening arises, which can be understood as the ability to closely focus one's attention, deeply and with sensitivity. By putting into practice the workshops on sound education, I work so that our communities are not just permeated by the sense of sight, which slowly crowds out the other senses, causing us to be principally visual societies, and that way of seeing is also oriented by cultural patterns that show us how things are done. Listening doesn't save us from that; it is also marked by preferences that favor sounds with higher decibel levels, leaving aside the microsounds of nature.

I can't deny it, my story is made up of these two experiences and there's still a lot to learn, I know that this profession is made of imagination and technology, and that there are many routes ahead to continue experiencing sound and language, which originate from it. I won't give up my efforts.

Griselda Sánchez Miguel





Finding Myself Through Radio

The journey began when a teacher came to my town to talk with us about community radio. Perhaps my curiosity to find out how a radio worked got the better of me; I didn't imagine that we would be able to have the equipment that made music play and that everyone in the town would be able to listen to it on their radios. The surprise was that there weren't machines, microphones, or computers for the workshop, just a CD player. My curiosity grew: how could we have a radio? Would it be very difficult to make this equipment work? How many of us would we need on our team to get the equipment to work? How would we raise enough money to buy the equipment we would need?

The incredible thing was that our teacher told us "now forget the equipment and all the technical things that can be learned quickly, we're going to talk about why you all want a radio station. What is the radio that you dream about?" The silence invaded us. There were 10 of us, I was the only woman, and I felt the pressure from everyone to speak, not just for myself but for the other women that couldn't be there; I kept quiet. Until that moment that was the last question I imagined someone would ask me at some point in my life, because the media is what it is, because that's how it should be and nothing in the world aside from its owners can say what is best.

What do I dream of? That question turned over and over, bouncing from one side of my mind to the other, searching for a way to escape because I didn't know how to answer when they asked me for the first time what I wanted this to be. Not my mother, not my brother, no one else but me: what do I like? What don't I like? "I don't know myself," I thought, because the first thing that came to me was what other people like and what I think I like because I don't know anything different, because I can only think about the radio I've listened to and say what I like, but truthfully I like very little of how the radio stations in my town are. In fact, I remembered that I didn't often listen to the radio; I don't even have a radio. There's only one in my house and my father decided when it would be turned on and only turned it on for sports programs, because he didn't like the rest of the music they played and complained that they played too many commercials. He always said it's better to listen to the cassettes of bands from our town. Just thinking about it I can hear that music in my head, I have now more than memorized the playlist, oh no!

That's what I don't like about the radio, at last the first responses... and that's how I slowly began to remember that yes, I do have preferences. I don't only want to hear programs directed exclusively toward adult men, or those that seem to only have ten CDs or cassettes in their music archive. Once these questions were sown, the teaching continued by putting a CD in the player. It wasn't music, it was stories; that was only the beginning of this journey of self-recognition and recognizing myself within my community, and it turned out that I only found I belonged there by leaving. I don't know if you have gone through something like this, but maybe you can understand, or perhaps imagine. That day made me question myself more than other people; now I'm trying to learn to produce radio programs with content that's more relevant to my life, learning how to leave the fear of the equipment behind and be able to move more than just the switch to turn it off or on. Amidst that brokenness is where I hope the Women's Radio Platform will continue to encourage me, that the compañeras can continue sharing their experience and that I can continue expressing myself from the heart.

Eva Melina



Giving Technology New Meaning



“You know how to fix a radio transmitter?” That is the question I’m typically asked, in a tone of surprise and incredulity, when I get to a community radio station to repair their equipment. But it’s not the question that makes me uncomfortable, it’s the tone, and above all the looks on their faces.

Generally the women express happiness and curiosity when they see me arrive with my tools and my self-confidence, while the men have doubtful looks on their faces, with a challenging attitude of “we’ll see if this is real.” The question is uncomfortable, and what comes next is that I have to prove it. Of course it’s easy for me, it’s enough that I start with some questions about the possible causes of the transmission failure and immediately the situation is reversed.

The men realize that they don’t even know how to answer, and the women begin to describe isolated incidents that don’t seem important but end up being essential: “that day in the afternoon it rained really hard and we heard a strange sound through the radio.” While the men look for more technical explanations that, generally, are phrases they’ve heard and repeat them without really knowing what they’re saying: “no, no, no, what happened was that there are a lot of CB radio antennae on the municipal building and that caused interference.” That’s when the confusion begins, I say that the women are right, and explain to the men why what they’re saying doesn’t make any sense: “Most likely a bolt of lightning struck and burned the transmitter, because the civilian equipment transmits using completely different frequencies than FM radio, which is why it would be impossible for them to generate interferences and break the transmitter.”

After this I can start working, explaining along the way what I’m doing to see if anyone becomes curious and asks questions about the technical aspects of radio, because what we need in community radio stations is not just good announcers but also people trained in the *tecnología* of community radio: programming, announcing, equipment operation, radio management, reporting, working with the community, basic knowledge about electricity and electronics: the basics. This was how I began to design workshops called First Aid for Community Radio Stations.

I don't know a lot, but what I know helps me to diagnose a problem and in many cases repair it. When people ask me how I learned, I tell them by doing it, asking, studying on my own and from other people who share their knowledge. That's why for me I don't treat it like a business but as fundamental knowledge to be shared. The funny part is that after I repair the equipment they baptize me an "engineer" (with the Spanish masculine ending of 'o') and don't lower me from that place, but in reality my professional training is as an anthropologist passionate about community radio.

I've been doing this for eight years and I have learned that the most important thing isn't to teach the other person to solder or calibrate an antenna, but to give them the assurance that everything can be learned without having to go to college to earn a degree in engineering. Another thing I've learned is that knowledge about radio frequencies is like a black hole in the universe, surrounded by myths that are difficult to dispel. Just as an example I'll tell you one of them. People always ask me what is the largest transmitter that I could build. They are referring to its power, the wattage, but I only work with low-power equipment of under 300 watts. Then they tell me that they want one like that because they want their signal to reach far away, covering their own town and all those around it and beyond that blocking the signal of the neighboring town. But that's not how it works. I have seen eight-watt equipment that covered entire cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants and thousand-watt equipment that only covered fifteen square kilometers. Part of this job is toppling these myths, but the greatest challenge has been doing what I enjoy as a woman. When I pick up a drill or a saw, immediately three men appear to help me as if I couldn't do it myself.

Often I've given workshops on how to build FM radio transmitters and their antennae starting from scratch, and the interesting thing is that the men always end up making the antenna because it's the part that involves drills and hacksaws, while the women do the work of soldering hundreds of tiny pieces of the circuit and that's where one understands why division of labor is oppressive to women. The first image that comes to my mind is of those huge electronics sweatshops in Asia where thousands of women lose their vision after years of soldering the internal parts of TVs, music equipment, or doing things of that nature, because it's believed that women can only do rote labor that doesn't involve thinking.

That why for me the Platform is a dream come true, it is the place that we need so that we don't feel alone, to build alliances and be nourished by the experiences we share as women working in radio. It is this space that allows me to protect myself as a woman able to support myself through what I enjoy doing. Thank you to all the women in radio.

Loreto Bravo





Women Demystifying Technology

I am Keyla Mesulemeth a 31-year-old woman of indigenous descent, and I live in the community of Villa Talea de Castro, in the Zapotec Sierra Mountains in the northern part of Oaxaca, in Mexico. Seven years ago, I began collaborating at my community's radio station, and am one of its founders.

Currently, I am the project organizer for the community cellphone project Talea GSM and director of the radio station Radio Dizha Kieru (In Our Own Words).

My experience as a woman in the field of technology and telecommunications has been very challenging; in a world designed by men, where they are the keepers of knowledge, the ones who understand how networks, spectrum, and dials work, I have had to stand firm and make my voice heard to make myself visible. To be taken into consideration by men, one must be self-assured and confident. Despite that, by creating telecommunications one develops critical thinking, creativity and personal development.

I have had to struggle against stereotypes and defined roles that are still very entrenched and work hard to break these prejudices, starting with those who question our abilities or moral character. This means breaking down machismo and doubts about our competence among male coworkers or even other women that accuse you of doing "men's work."

Without a doubt, it has been one of the best parts of my life; it has filled my mind with new knowledge, my heart with great friendships, and my path with new hopes. It is a path that is not taken by everyone, but that is full of satisfaction, where we are reducing the gender gap in the world of technology.

In this sense, the Oaxacan Women's Radio Platform represents for me a great learning opportunity, an exchange of experiences and a vessel into which each one of us can pour out her knowledge, thoughts, emotions and sadness. Like a sisterhood of women walking toward a glimpse of the same horizon.

Keyla Mesulemeth





Digital Security and Radio

Free, or community, radio and the exercise of communication in Mexico is an unrecognized practice, seldom guaranteed and even criminalized.

Towns and communities searching to found communications spaces in which they feel represented, of creating narratives where the stories of voices unrecognized by hegemony, have appropriated technology in order to build their own media and paths in order to exercise fundamental rights, such as the right to communication and free expression.

The programming of hegemonic communication has excluded the practices, wisdom, and knowledge of Mexican society, it has omitted very serious issues for Mexico, in exchange it imports topics and programming that is completely foreign to the realities of the majority of the population. The history of media in Mexico proves that attempts to impact the visibility of social problems many times have consequences that are a detriment to freedom. An example of this is the recently approved Telecommunications Law.

The Telecom Law awards the recognition to community radio stations as legal administrative entities, non-existent until now in terms of radioelectric spectrum, however, it accentuates monopoly and restricts the existence of community radio stations. Among other gems, geolocating was approved, signal blocking and data collection affecting the freedom of expression and in cases of social protest, could be used to threaten citizen liberties and impede journalism and communications, in order to slow down the sharing of important information.

Taking into consideration that the internet, like cell phones have become allies in the free, community-based, alternative, or popular sharing of communication, information which is collected and circulated, but that we haven't paid sufficient attention to, for example:

- the exact location we're at when we upload a photo
- the history of our web searches and the websites we visit
- a complete list of the people we've sent messages to on any given day

So when the internet is used to share sensitive information, the digital footprint can be problematic, which is to say, the audio clips, the images

and the videos that give more information than it initially seems, such as:

- information about where and when they were taken
- more details about the environment and context of the situations that they originally intended to show.

However it's not only those who are sympathetic or allies who see this information and its digital footprint. Not just the corporate services that support social networks, but also the government see it and retains it. And just as the internet "never forgets," problems can arise in the future, when the political situation worsens, need I say more?

The criteria for what is and is not legal in Mexico is not clear, and has become a way of persecuting people and collecting information about them that is used to justify it. On certain occasions we are told it will make us more secure, that we should concede part of our freedom or privacy. But reducing our privacy can make our security vulnerable.

It can certainly be overwhelming to read and habitually document the dangers of online activity and in the real lives of communicators and defenders of human rights, however it is possible to minimize the risks we face when we are conscious of what's happening with the information we provide and can make good decisions about what our options are, and what the consequences of those options are, and we do what we can to assume the consequences.

For example, being informed about the risks faced by activists and communities that defend human rights is very good and important in building support for those who are at risk. However, it is equally important to recognize that one who writes assumes a great responsibility for the people s/he writes about. Thus it is necessary to think carefully if we are turning over information that could involuntarily be of help to adversaries looking to identify the people we're writing about.

In some situations, high visibility could help to protect people who face threats. The public attention can assure that their rights are not violated while no one is looking. However, in this way we can also expose ourselves and our activist compañeros/as and their friends and family to risk. We must choose secure forms of communication, protecting the personal data related to them, assuring that the messages, audio clips, the

photos and videos that are published do not show a specific context that shouldn't be made public. There are also a series of practices that help to fight against a political-corporate regime with clear tendencies toward social control.

Estrella Soria





As women,
we are our
best allies



Tania tells me the story of Julia, her mother. Julia comes from a large family with many brothers and sisters. Her father worked in the fields and her mother made tortilla chips to sell in the market in Asunción Ixtaltepec, Oaxaca. One day, when she was a young girl, she decided that she didn't want to marry young or have five children by the time she was 30 like her aunts or her mother. She dreamed of being a healer, she wanted to become a nurse. Filled with fear, she confessed to her mother that she wanted to study, knowing that this would challenge her father, who wasn't going to let her leave the community. In that moment, her mother became her ally, and Julia's dream of becoming a nurse became their shared goal.

One morning, her mother told her husband that she was going to go with Julia for a few days to Mexico City, that they would be back soon. That 10-hour journey on a bus was the beginning of a dream. Some time afterward, the mother returned to the community, but without Julia. This cost her ten years of silence from her father, because he accused her of being a traitor for what she had done, for abandoning her brothers and sisters and not supporting them. During her years studying to become a nurse, Julia's brothers and sisters studied and developed themselves as people, which made her think that following her dreams was the right thing to do. Her father's silence pained her, but the support of her mother gave her strength. Today, Julia lives and works in her community as a nurse, she's married and has three daughters that have inherited the strength and example of their mother and grandmother.

When Tania told me Julia's story, I thought about the women that have challenged their families, society, themselves, in order to achieve a goal, an idea, a dream, and in the self-confidence that they acquire while making their own decisions. This doesn't only have to do with empowerment, but with discovering one's own abilities. By leaving behind the fears rooted in social customs and formal and family education that we acquire as women, we break prejudices about ourselves and demystify the role that we as women are expected to fulfill.

This is the task for many women in terms of radio, that they have opted not just to be mothers, wives, housewives, teachers, and students, but that they have taken a step further to share their ideas, their voice, their creativity. But who have been their allies, the motivators who are there from the beginning and throughout the process? What have been the

most difficult challenges and joys on the journey? As women, have we accompanied one another in this process? Many faces come to mind of the women I've met, those who have continued with radio and those who have left for different reasons: because they got married, found other life options, or, in severe cases, because they were silenced, murdered for having exercised their right to communicate. Like Felicitas Martínez Sánchez and Teresa Bautista Merino, who were Triqui radio hosts on the show *The Voice Breaking the Silence* in San Juan Copala, Oaxaca, Mexico.

During the first women's radio *Guelaguetza* organized by Palabra Radio in Oaxaca in 2012, various of us women who work in radio who didn't know each other met for the first time, even though we had been doing the same work for years. We discovered that we felt alone in the process of radio production, with far too many similar experiences, that stubbornness alone had enabled us to go on. We reflected that it was important to get together and share our energies, share what we had learned, and that not one more *compañera* should have to leave radio due to pressure from other people or circumstances; that we had to unite our voices, our ideas, our dreams and our aspirations.

That's how the Oaxacan Women's Radio Platform was created and how the approximately ten women involved continue to shape that reality, giving it presence, happiness and, above all, strength. One of our dreams is to leave a precedent for the generations of women searching to build a better situation through language, so that they know that among women we are capable of organizing ourselves and achieving many things. The journey is not easy, but it's also not impossible. After years of each one of us working individually on her project, in different parts of Oaxaca, we have found each other and given one another strength. The diversity among us enriches us as women but above all as people, because each time we see each other, we meet and talk not just about radio, but about our joys and worries, and when we do this we carry with us a little piece of each one of us.

That's how Julia, with the solidarity and support of her mother, one day broke the natural life cycle that had carried the women of her family for generations. Those of us with our voice and actions want to be allies and accomplices for other women, and as the women of the Oaxacan Women's Radio Platform, create a space where we can work together

for something that we believe in and feel is just, where there are many alliances, empathy and where we can stop feeling alone. Where we can continue to grow professionally and as human beings and build a world in which many worlds fit.

Mary Cruz J.C.





Collectivism within Community Community Communications Systems

During the short time I've been collaborating with community media in indigenous towns, the experiences I've had emerged because there are realities and contexts that are in chaos. When we force ourselves to ask why we do what we do, there is a common response: "there are situations in our environment that we don't like and we want to change them." We see how the capitalist system and governments continue making the poor poorer, we see that Mother Earth is only a source of resources to exploit for the benefit of the few, we see how those in indigenous towns continue to be marginalized and dispossessed of their ancestral lands, we see that everything and all of us are labeled with a dollar sign. There is 'bad government' in place, as the Zapatistas call it, and we must resist it. But have we asked if we ourselves are reproducers of forms of oppression? To change the world, one must start the change at the level of the home, or, one could say, with ourselves and our own.

If we dare to look closely at our task of communicating, we realize that we are not just responding to those realities that oppress us from the outside. We become communicators that are resisting a way of life that has already been molded, taken as a given both culturally and socially. We are an endless source of experiences, trying to make media from a collective space; we seek relationships that are more just, healthier, more equitable, more dignified. But do equitable relationships really exist between those of us who give life to the radio program, or are we the first to reproduce hierarchies? Are all voices heard equally, or do we allow some to make their voices our voice? Are decisions discussed and analyzed or are they just quickly approved? How do men and women treat one another, adults and youth, founders of the collective and those who recently joined? Do we try to make waves to change the system that we don't agree with, or do we wait for somebody else to do it and just piggyback off of their efforts?

These questions push me to reposition my work from a place of community communication and popular education. I see myself as a reproducer of the ways of life that I criticize because I have imposed my ideas on many occasions. I have stopped asking questions and begun speaking, and as a result have stopped sharing my ideas, have left behind my capacity for critical thinking of both myself and others, have stopped making proposals, I have buried my sense of wonder and my passion for what I do. However, I don't share this recognition to paint myself as a victim, but as a possibility to continue doing what I'm doing but in a different way.

We know that there are no formulas or recipes for how to bake this cake called “creating media from collectivism.” There is no experience that won’t have its contradictions along the way. The invitation is in beginning to dare to speak, not just about the achievements that make us feel good about ourselves, but of the challenges that come our way, starting within our collectives.

We don’t know how this will be sustained, we aren’t counting a title or an already-defined structure, we are not a network, we aren’t even our own collective although we belong to other collectives, we are not an organization. We are a space from which our female-ness encourages us to develop our radio work, so that in this way we can promote better human relationships, each one from her own experience and together with the others on this journey.

Alejandra Carrillo Olano



Feelings and Thoughts Voices and experiences from community radio

Oaxaca Women Radio Platform

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/radiadoras.oaxaca>

First Edition: September 2014

Proofreading by Ruth Orozco

Photos by Pauline Rosen-Cros

Translation by Miriam Taylor

Design, Illustration and Layout by Alejandra Canseco

Compiled by Mary Cruz Juárez Cabrera and Loreto Bravo Muñoz

Printing by El Castor. Productos Gráficos



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