

Patricia Zamorano from the short film *Matriarchy*, interviewed by Vera Hofmann.



VH: Patricia Zamorano, you are the writer, co-director and producer of the short film *Matriarchy*, produced in 2017. Congratulations to your first film! *Matriarchy* is entering festivals and galleries just now. So I am especially happy that we can screen it at Schwules Museum in January/February 2018 shortly after the film's release. The first month of the year long film program titled "12 Moons" is dedicated to a range of mother*-daughter* relations from each female* filmmaker's perspective.

The film is situated and shot in Boyle Heights, a neighbourhood in the City of Los Angeles that has a 95% Latinx population. Can you give us an insight into life in Boyle Heights and especially the situation for women* and queers?

PZ: Yes, life in Boyle heights is pretty much laid back and chill. This neighborhood is a beautiful community that embraces and consists of a big queer community.

VH: I have read in an online article about a recent play of yours named *Matriarch* that you were a "flannel-shirted tomboy". In the preceding conversation with your team you were introduced as a "queer mujer". How did and how do you encounter misogyny and homophobia in both of these identities and in your understanding as a Chicana?

PZ: I think that being Chicana and encountering misogyny and homophobia over the years has thickened my skin and I've been able to handle each situation in a way that, either I check them, educate them, or walk away from a dangerous situation that could be detrimental to my well being. I've learned to pick my fights and take care of my energy.

VH: How do you perceive the role and presence of the men in your family and your community- also in relation to them wanting to "toughen up" women* by using physical violence?

PZ: I've encountered violence and been repeatedly beaten by my older brother. Not for being queer, but for being strong in character and identity. And I've also have encountered love with my younger brother, who I've instilled in him examples of honor, respect, love and to embrace women* of all colors, race, gender and sexual preference.

VH: The film gives voice to your turbulent biography and on having to become the matriarch of your family. Throughout the film, you present the relationship to your mother in a multifaceted and dense way. You talk not only about the abuse and gender rejection you received from her, but also display her as a strong identification figure and backbone for you. You talk about your guilt of being a rebellious daughter, about dependency and reversed-roles. Could you elaborate on a certain aspect of your relationship with your mother that you find significant?

PZ: The impact and role my mother played in my life was of a strong indigenous woman who showed me how powerful women* are. My mother was my role model in how to navigate in this world with determination, perseverance, strength and resiliency. That we can do anything we set our minds to.

VH: The story you present is an impressive survivor's story of which I am sure inspires a lot of people. In the film you say that you didn't ask for that role, meaning also the multiple responsibilities that come with it. I assume that this was a spiritually intense time for you, questioning existence, mother*hood, childship?

PZ: Yes, it was a difficult time in my life because, I was rebelling and wilding out. And, at the same time I was having to deal with the fact that my mother would not be able to survive her burns from the fire. I was in such an upheaval of emotions that all I could do is ask my father God in heaven, to "save my mom." I took on the unconscious decision to care for my mom and siblings and to leave a world that was no good for me, behind. And in turn, this tragedy saved me.

VH: In there I see a critique of the political system that puts too much pressure on the mother* figure. This is a universal problem for women* in all patriarchal societies. Would you agree? And where is the resort or the utopia? Matriarchy 2.0? Queertopia?

PZ: Yes, I do agree, that there is a universal problem for women* in all patriarchal societies everywhere in this world. That in these turbulent times where patriarchy is rearing it's ugly little head, no pun intended, a hundred fold is frightening. The ideal realm of a perfect utopia would be that men could come into an understanding that matriarchal societies, of all races, genders and sexual preferences are necessary and very much needed to bring back harmony to this world that is heavily burdened with war, misogyny, gay-bashing, climate changes, starvation and so many other problems.

VH: Looking back at your situation that you frame in the film from today's perspective, how do you connect to it now and what were the healing forces that led your way through this metamorphosis besides the power of words, especially poetry?

PZ: Looking back at this film Rosa Navarrete, Lauren Ballesteros and I created with the monologue, is that I hold it dearly and close to my heart. At the time of my writing it and sharing it first on stage, then on film, is that I had no idea how, not only would it be so healing to me, but to so many people. It has been such a journey of significant events that have made me stronger, more connected to my higher power, and to have been able to heal through spoken word, story telling and writing my narratives. I'm just grateful and immensely thankful for it and my partners involved.

VH: What are the tools with which you and your community of queers and Chicanas empower each other? Do you have enough safer spaces to gather and celebrate your powers?

PZ: In Los Angeles, California there are so many LGBTQIA+ centers that provide safe spaces. There is always something going on any given night. From holding talking circles, open mic night, theatre, art, to celebrating at clubs, bars and restaurants.

VH: Thank you very much for taking time for this interview and for making this film! Please give my gratitude to the whole team.