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#89 Women Volume 2

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Editorial #89: Women *Volume 2*

By: Caroline Risacher

On 11 October, Bolivia celebrated the Day of the Bolivian Woman. The date – not to confuse it with International Women's Day on 8 March – marks the birth of Bolivian poet Adela Zamudio in 1854, a fervent defender of women's rights. The Supreme Decree establishing 11 October as a national celebration was approved in 1980 by President Lidia Gueiler, the only female president in Bolivia's history.

Awareness days like this are important, as they can trigger debates and make people empathetic regarding certain issues. The month of October is also Breast Cancer Awareness Month, for instance. But this 11 October, I was left with a bitter flavour in my mouth. As people were honouring their daughters, wives, mothers, coworkers and friends with roses, newspaper headlines kept announcing more women being murdered, beaten and abused. In fact, Bolivia's situation regarding women is one of the most ambiguous in the region, if not the world.

The following day, Página Siete, a La Paz–based newspaper, reported that 85 women were victims of femicide in Bolivia so far in 2018, and that 18,576 women had suffered physical abuse at home. These numbers are alarming because they are already higher than the data from 2017 (73 femicides cases in 2017). Reports from NGOs and international organisations also paint an sombre picture of the situation in Bolivia. Abortion is still criminalised, and the country has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the region, second only to Haiti.

There is a real contradiction in Bolivian society when it comes to the treatment of women. On the one hand, it is a society infused with machismo, something that Latin American countries share and that begins early at home when parents and grandparents – without necessarily realising it – start treating boys and girls differently. Machismo, as an intricate part of the home and the culture, directly affects Latina women and their development, and by extension affects society as a whole. This alone doesn't explain the high rate of violence against women in the country, but it certainly is part of a bigger problem.

On the other hand, Bolivia has been making progress and is, at least politically, one of the most advanced countries in the world when it comes to equality in gender parity. The 2008 Constitution recognises the rights of women as a fundamental part of the structure of society, and a series of decrees protecting their rights have been promulgated. Bolivia is the leading South American nation in the inclusion of women in politics and has the second-most women-dominated Parliament in the world (after Rwanda), with 53% of the seats held by women.

Gender parity is a fundamental concept in the Andean **cosmovisión**, which can be found in the **chacha-warmi** (man-woman) philosophy. It refers to a code of conduct based on duality and complementarity which are considered the pillars of the family and of Andean communities. Men and women have to work together to create a successful home and society. But the reality of daily life for Bolivian women is quite different as these two extremes become intertwined and machismo remains a dominant force in women's lives.

But the reality is not the same for every Bolivian women. **Kolla**, **camba**, **cochala**, **chapaca**, **chuquisaqueña**, **Aymara**, **Quechua**, gay, trans, chola, **gordita** or whatever label one has, there is a multitude of identities and realities that intersect and cross over. Even among one category, one will find many layers. For instance, the iconic image representing Bolivian women in the world is the **cholita** with her long braids, multilayered skirts and bowler hat, but there are numerous types of *cholitas*, and reducing the Bolivian woman or *cholita* to just one word and one image is reductive and unfair.

We published our first Women's issue in July 2012, and we are now revisiting this topic in an attempt to further understand some of the realities that Bolivian women face today. But this doesn't mean that we don't have to think about them the rest of the year, or that the realities of Bolivian men are not as important. Like the Day of the Bolivian Woman which takes place once a year, this issue attempts to raise questions, open a debate, invite reflection and present a picture of who the women are that have built and are shaping Bolivia.

We are talking about your morning **caserita**, the police woman or the lady who comes to clean your house every week. This is about the girls you follow on Instagram and the (rare) women driving minibuses. And let's not forget the most important woman of all: **Pachamama**, a.k.a. Mother Earth, the goddess of fertility who provides life and protection. She is still revered in traditional ceremonies and is sometimes syncretised as the Virgin of Candelaria.

The larger problem that women face here in Bolivia is still the reigning machismo. It can turn into violence and even femicide. Or it can be more subtle, such as the way your grandmother always gives your brother the nicer cut of meat while you are asked to clear up everybody's plates and are expected to not have too much of an opinion and to be married with children by 30. Machismo is not just something that men impose on women; it's part of society's structures. Indeed, women can be just as macho as men – if not more so. The change will be slow and gradual, but as long as one can manage to avoid repeating the toxic and sexist patterns that start at home, it will come.

N.B. Several Spanish and Aymara words are marked in **bold** throughout this issue. Their meanings can be found in our glossary.

WOMEN AT THE WHEELS

LA PAZ'S MINIBUS INDUSTRY IS MALE-DOMINATED, BUT FEMALE DRIVERS ARE MAKING INROADS

TEXT & PHOTO: MARIE DE LANTIVY

If you live in La Paz, or are even just visiting, you will most likely take a minibus at some point. There are also **micros** (the large blue or yellow buses), **trufis** (taxis with a fixed route), PumaKataris (modern buses with fixed stops) and of course the cable-car system, **Mi Teleférico**. However, the minibus – actually a minivan – remains the most commonly used form of public transport in the city, as it covers the most frequented routes and allows its passengers to hop on and off whenever they want. It is also the cheapest mode of transport.

Every driver (and their minibus) is associated with a transportation syndicate that strictly regulate routes and represent the drivers. Minibus drivers tend to be men, of the 3,000 members in the Señor de Mayo syndicate, only five are women. We recently spoke to one of the syndicate's female drivers, Maribel Cuevas, who has been a member of the Señor de Mayo syndicate for 11 years and was the first woman to join.

'We need more women,' Cuevas says. 'Women are more attentive and patient while driving.' Surprisingly, she says that it isn't more difficult for women to work as minibuses drivers, as she didn't feel like she had to prove herself more than her male colleagues.

So why aren't there more female minibus drivers? Is it a dangerous job for women? Cuevas doesn't think so, even when driving at night. 'There are around 14 passengers with me,' she says. 'I think it is more dangerous for taxi drivers, because they are alone with the passengers.' Moreover, she says that people feel more secure when they jump into the minibus and see a woman behind the wheel.

Perhaps there are so few women drivers because, in a society like Bolivia's where gender roles are fairly inflexible, it's just not practical. Cuevas works from four in the morning till seven at night. 'It is not an easy profession,' she says. 'You abandon your family.' Cuevas's children are in middle school, and it's her mother who takes care of them. But, she adds, sometimes the job gives her more freedom, because 'you can go and come back from work any time of the day.'

Even if being a minibuses driver is not especially dangerous for women, and even if the job allows for more flexibility to manage one's schedule, it is still a dominated by men – but this may change as long as women like Cuevas lead the way and show that it is possible. And Cuevas loves her job: 'I don't have any regrets choosing to be a driver,' she says. 'I want to drive a bigger bus now.'

WOMEN
OF LA PAZ

MIRIAM ROJAS ONTIVERAS:
Photo by Sergio Suárez Málaga

‘We have a lot of rights now, unlike before. I am very happy to be a Bolivian woman.’

ANGELA ABIGAIL CALVIMONTES PÉREZ:

from the Alalay Foundation

Photo by Marie de Lantivy

‘These girls have a lot of energy. When I cook with them we’re turning that energy into something positive.’

—Valentina Arteaga

CARLAS PATZI:

Photo by Ivan Rodriguez Petkovic

‘It is the woman who represents what we do. This is what we show, the entire woman. – with her essence... This is not only about the clothes – the *mujer of pollera* is not an item – this is about the woman.’

—Ana Palza

PATRICIA ZAMORA:

Photo by Sophie Blow

‘A Bolivian woman today is independent, capable of having a career. She can do the housework, look after her children.’

C. SEMPERTEGUI:

Photo by Sophie Blow

‘Being a woman in Bolivia is a blessing. We have a very unique culture, which is something that not every woman around the world can say that they have’.

THE CARE ECONOMY IN BOLIVIA

VALUING LIFE AND DOMESTIC LABOUR

TEXT: VIVIAN BRAGA
PHOTO: MARIE DE LANTIVY

Bolivia is a melting pot of different ethnicities. It is home to women that belong to 36 different nations recognised by the country's Constitution. Whether they are Andean, Amazonian, rural, urban, rich, poor, lesbian or heterosexual women, what all of them have in common is the vast amount of time they spend performing domestic tasks and caring for people inside and outside their homes.

The majority of Bolivian women, mainly those with a lower income, dedicate most of their time to domestic work and caring for family members. In general, this work is not remunerated and is thus invisible to the mainstream economy, where, according to local employment surveys, women are considered inactive. The lack of statistical information concerning this work inhibits the quantification of what these women contribute economically to the country.

The survival of the human species depends on our interdependence and on the decisions we make on a daily basis. At the centre of these decisions is the question of how families organise themselves in society to procure the resources they need and take care of their members. In a study called 'The Economy of Care in Bolivia', Elizabeth Zamora observed that Bolivian women, especially those from low-income demographics, bear the brunt of the weight of domestic responsibilities, which thwarts their participation in political and social life. Even when women have a larger participation in the labour market, they still allocate time to performing domestic tasks, which often results in women working double or triple shifts on a daily basis.

Amongst the set of tasks considered 'domestic' are those specifically related to the care of individuals. According to Zamora, the demand for care services in Bolivia is directed mostly to the younger population, which can be subdivided into three categories: children up to five years old, children from five to ten years old and adolescents. The most common care tasks in Bolivian households involve getting children ready for school, feeding them, watching over them, bathing them, etc. These tasks are almost exclusively delegated to women. They are carried out by housewives, mothers, grandmothers, older daughters, close relatives, or 'trusted' domestic workers.

Some women, mainly those from a higher social status, choose to leave their jobs or work from home to have more time to care for their family. The majority of Bolivian women, however, do not have the freedom to make that choice, given the professional and financial risks it may entail. According to Zamora, if Bolivian women are not at home taking care of their children, the elderly or the disabled, they are working in hospitals, nurseries, social assistance centres or caring for their family members. These women do not choose how much time they want to devote to caregiving activities. The resulting responsibility leads to a loss of autonomy for women, which limits their economic development.

GIVEN THE RIGID GENDER ROLES IN BOLIVIA, **NOT ALL INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE PROVIDE A SERVICE OF CARE.**

The concept of care economy has its origin in feminist economics. The care economy gives visibility and value to the human energy that is dedicated to caregiving activities. These tasks can be thought of as services that are overlooked by dominant economic theories that focus on financial relationships. Shedding light on this issue has sparked a crucial debate on the role of caregiving services in a country's economy. The care economy puts these activities at the centre of the conversation. It recognises care as an indispensable pillar of society, acknowledging that without actions of care, societies would collapse.

We all have the right to be cared for and to care for others, but who should have that obligation in society?

Given the rigid gender roles in Bolivia, not all individuals who are economically active provide a service of care. On top of the issue of gender equality, the question arises: How can society meet the growing demands of care if more women are entering the labour market in a non-caregiving capacity? This is an increasingly relevant question given the growing demand for care services due to a growing aging population.

To address this imminent crisis of care, a set of institutions, advocacy groups and people committed to improving the living conditions of women in Bolivia, established the National Platform for Social and Public Co-Responsibility of Care in October of this year. Their objective is to create spaces for analysis and debate, as well as to formulate proposals and to develop strategies aimed at mobilising the State and civil society.

This initiative aims at finding a balance between the role of the State, civil society and the market in guaranteeing access to quality care services. It is implied that women should not be exclusively responsible for providing these services. There are relevant examples of other social arrangements, such as the creation of child care centres, the extension of school hours for children to do their homework at school, care centres for the elderly and campaigns to encourage men to share the weight of caregiving tasks at home.

The premise for these actions is the need for the democratisation of care and the implementation of public policies that recognise the importance of caregiving in society. This means recognising our interdependence and making sure everyone can play a role in caring for others and being cared for themselves.

ALTAR OF THE DEAD

THE FOOTPRINT OF WOMEN IN THE HISTORY OF BOLIVIA

TEXT: ADRIANA L. MURILLO A.

BARTOLINA SISA:

AYMARA WARRIOR

Bartolina Sisa was born in the **ayllu** community of Sullkawi, near La Paz, in 1753. She dedicated her life to fighting against the oppression of Spanish colonial rule, seeking freedom and a dignified life for Bolivian indigenous people. Bartolina married Tupac Katari, the indigenous Aymara leader who commanded the largest known insurrection against Spanish rule in Bolivia, laying siege to La Paz for six months. Leading numerous battles with her husband, Bartolina was in charge of the Aymara army. Despite her notable leadership, her own companions betrayed her and delivered her as a prisoner of war to Sebastián Segurola, the Spanish governor of La Paz. Bartolina and Tupac Katari were ultimately sentenced to death. Tupac Katari died in November 1781 and Bartolina in September 1782. She was tortured, hung and quartered. Her head and limbs were displayed in the city.

GREGORIA APAZA:

GENERAL

Gregoria Apaza was born in Ayo Ayo in 1751 and died in La Paz in 1782. She was the sister of Julián Apaza – or Tupac Katari. As her brother's right hand, she administered goods, organised camping grounds and directed warriors into battle during the siege of La Paz led by Tupac Katari. On 16 October 1781, when Spanish troops lifted the siege, Tupac Katari and his wife Bartolina Sisa were captured. Gregoria went to their rescue and was also captured in battle by the Spanish. Since she was known as 'queen' among indigenous people, the Spanish paraded her as a prisoner through the streets of the city with a crown of nails and thorns and a heavy blade in her hand similar to a scepter. Gregoria and her sister-in-law, Bartolina, were executed that day, on 5 September 1782, at the Plaza de Armas of La Paz, now called Plaza Murillo.

JUANA AZURDUY DE PADILLA

FIGHTER FOR INDEPENDENCE

Juana Azurduy de Padilla was born in Sucre on 12 July 1780. She was a patriotic fighter for the emancipation of Bolivia from the hands of the Spanish crown. She was brought up in a convent and was supposed to become a nun, but she chose another path. As the wife of General Major Manuel Ascencio Padilla, Juana was one of the most well-known figures during Bolivia's fight for independence. After her husband's death, she assumed the command of the patriotic guerrilla with the title of **Coronela**. Manuel Belgrano, an Argentinian military leader, was so astonished by her grit on the battlefield that he handed her his sword in recognition of her loyalty to the cause of independence. Juana died in Jujuy in 1860, in poverty.

ADELA ZAMUDIO

PIONEERING WRITER FEMINISM

Adela Zamudio was born in Cochabamba on 11 October 1854 and died on 2 June 1928. She spent her childhood in Corocoro, where her father worked as a mining engineer. Adela learned to read and write at a very young age. Her first known works date from 1868. Her life was marked by economic hardship. The first crisis she experienced was in 1870, when her family lost the farm they lived on in Corani due to an ill-fated business that her father undertook. Adela knew how to spread her ideals through articles, poems, stories and novels and is considered a forerunner of feminist thinking in Bolivia. She developed a significant body of work in favor of the intellectual and social emancipation of women, giving prestige to the idea of femininity. She directed Bolivia's first secular grade school in La Paz and founded the country's first painting school for women in 1911.

MARÍA NÚÑEZ DEL PRADO

SCULPTURE ARTIST

María Núñez del Prado was born in La Paz on 17 October 1910. María discovered her love of art while studying sculptural modeling techniques as a young woman in the city. She developed a passion for sculpture, inspired by the work of Michelangelo, and went on to study at the Academy of Fine Arts in La Paz, graduating in 1930. María stayed at her alma mater as an instructor of artistic anatomy and sculpture and became the first woman to achieve a position as the chair of the Academy. She was one of the most respected sculptors in Latin America. Her work is highly sensuous, with rolling curves carved from native Bolivian woods, as well as black granite, alabaster, basalt and white onyx. One of her most famous pieces is 'White Venus' (1960), a stylised female body in white onyx. Another celebrated work is 'Mother and Child', also sculpted in the same medium. Much of her work is inspired on indigenous Bolivian cultures.

LIDIA GUEILER TEJADA

BOLIVIAN POLITICS

Lidia Gueiler Tejada was born in Cochabamba in 1926. She studied at the American Institute of Cochabamba where she obtained the title of accountant. After 1948, Lidia became an active participant in the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR), where she trained in politics and became a distinguished leader of women and youth. During the 1952 Revolution, she fought for equal rights and opportunities for all. In 1953 she traveled to Hamburg as secretary of the Consulate General of Bolivia. On 16 November 1979, the Bolivian Congress revoked the mandate of interim president Guevara Arze and entrusted Lidia Gueiler, president of the Chamber of Deputies, with the Presidency of Bolivia. Her role in managing an attempted coup led by Colonel Natusch Buch a few weeks earlier earned her that distinction. Lidia became the first woman to exercise the presidency of Bolivia from 1979 to 1980, and the only woman who has ever presided over the country.

DOMITILA CHUNGARA

MINING LEADER

Domitila Chungara was born in Llallagua, Potosí on 7 May 1937 and died in Cochabamba on 12 March 2012. She was an outstanding leader of Bolivian feminism. Raised by a humble family, Domitila gave numerous testimonies about the suffering of miners in the country. First, she worked as a **palliri** (dedicated to rescuing ore among the waste or clearings) to feed her five sisters and her sick mother. She then began a political career as executive secretary of the Housewives Committee of the **Mina Siglo XX**, a vital body of support to the union of mining workers. She believed in the joint struggle of men and women against the unjust exploitation of miners.

MENSTRUATION: ITS MYTHS AND REMOVING SHAME

THE REVIVAL OF OLD TRADITIONS IS CORRECTING MISINFORMATION ABOUT PERIODS IN BOLIVIA

TEXT: JOSEPHINE ZAVAGLIA
PHOTO: MARIE DE LANTIVY & JOSEPHINE ZAVAGLIA

Like many other countries, Bolivia is a place where menstruation is spoken about only in hushed tones, and where the topic can induce a certain shame among many girls and women. In Bolivia, however, myths and old wives' tales about menstruation spread false information and contribute to the obscurity that cloaks the topic. The tales that have been passed down range from the amusing to the absurd, such as that eating mayonnaise will shorten the length of a period; having sex while menstruating can cause harm to a woman (although this one's quite global); exposing menstrual blood to the natural elements can change the course of the weather; or that used sanitary products when mixed with other rubbish can cause cancer and other illnesses for the whole community – a particularly deleterious falsehood that interferes in women's and girls' participation in public life.

However, tides are changing. Since the mid-2010s, UNICEF, the UN's children's-health programme, has worked with rural communities in Bolivia to dismantle these myths through education and to promote menstrual health by providing school bathrooms. There's also been a rediscovery of ancestral wisdom – through women's circles and the use of plant medicine – that recognises the sacred function of menstruation and removes the shame of this near-universal female rite. Rocío Alarcón, a phytotherapist (plant-medicine practitioner), though, says that menstruation is still an oft-undiscussed topic. 'A colleague and I began doing talks in schools about menstruation, and the girls would say, 'Wow, I can't believe they're talking about this,' she says.

The shame that many women and girls share about the topic is countered by 'giving them the assurance that [menstruation] is something very important and even sacred,' Alarcón says. 'There are still many mothers in our society [who say to their daughters when they are menstruating]: "How awful" [or] "You poor thing." To begin to break these stigmas depends on every one of us.'

The big brands of female sanitary products exacerbate this stigma as well. '[Advertisements] say "Don't get dirty" "Don't stain," and they also say to us, "No one can find out!"' says Alarcón. These toxic ideas are further circulated by harmful products. 'They also put other substances in these products like perfumes and, much worse, gels that absorb lots of fluid and convert into a jelly so you don't stain,' Alarcón adds. 'But nobody says that skin absorbs as well, like a sponge, and these toxicities can stay in the body for up to months.'

Kotex, perhaps the biggest name in tampons and pads in Bolivia, ran a campaign earlier this year with the hashtag #EsosDíasDelMes ('those days of the month') including education programmes in schools with a publicity campaign featuring giant boxes of the company's products for distribution. It was an admirable outreach campaign to normalise what is certainly normal for approximately two billion people, but, as Alarcón explains: 'A lot of the time the women [in rural areas] have their own methods of managing their menstruation that they have been using for years, and then [companies] come and tell them to start using their products.'

An intersection between feminist discourse and environmental awareness is now propelling tampon and sanitary-pad alternatives into the mainstream. Menstrual cups are becoming increasingly popular in South America, with a number of South American brands having recently entered the market. Other alternatives like reusable cotton pads, though, have long been used in Bolivia, and Alarcón says that women can even make their own 'from cotton fabric or even old T-shirts you no longer use.'

Bolivian women are reclaiming old traditions and honouring their monthly flow through conversation and collaboration on the topic . The women's collective Warmi Luna Creciente even recently had its Encuentro Cultural Feminino at the Museum of Ethnography and Folklore in La Paz, another step forward in removing the shame and secretiveness that has until now shamed women's monthly cycles. '[When we] speak between women,' Alarcón says, 'we support each other, we listen to each other, and it's always very healing.'

PLANT REMEDIES FOR MENSTRUAL CRAMPS

Alarcón recommends making a tea by boiling fresh rosemary and/or oregano for no more than five minutes. Rosemary is a vascular plant that stimulates the menstrual flow, so for this reason it is recommended to drink up to three cups a day, one week prior to menstruation, up until the first day of bleeding.

Use your thumb to measure the dose: six thumb lengths of rosemary for every three cups of tea. 'The thumb helps us get a dosage for each person, because we all have distinct thumb sizes,' Alarcón says. Use only plants that have been grown without pesticides. Chamomile can also help ease and relax cramps as well.

WHAT'S COOKING VALENTINA

A RISING FEMALE CHEF IN BOLIVIA

TEXT: MARIE DE LANTIVY / PHOTO: MARIE DE LANTIVY & LUCIANO CARAZAS

We all know women who cook: mothers, sisters, grandmothers, the woman around the corner who makes **api con pastel**. Finding a female cook is easy, but finding a female chef? That's another story. The culinary world is still a male-dominated space, even though these chefs usually talk about how following the recipes of their mothers.

But things are slowly changing. Not long ago I met Valentina Arteaga, the woman behind the WhatsCookingValentina Instagram account. Arteaga is a cooking teacher for children at the Alalay foundation, she makes videos of recipes for the food magazine *Azafrán* and is the owner and chef of a soon-to-open restaurant. Cooking has always been her passion. She studied in a culinary school in Peru for three years, interned at Gustu, worked as an intern for a year at a Ritz Carlton in the United States and completed a master's degree in Spain.

Two years ago, Arteaga came back to Bolivia. At first, she wanted to open a restaurant, but the project seemed too complicated at the time, so she became a food consultant. Five months ago, she started her Instagram account, which has now more than 2,000 followers. In light of this quick success, she decided to launch her brand What's Cooking Valentina, with the goal of doing something new, something that doesn't exist in Bolivia. That's how she started taking pictures of her meals in her kitchen, sharing recipes and writing about the places where she likes to eat.

Everything about her brand concerns Bolivian food and culture. It gives people from abroad an insider's look into Bolivian cuisine and the local way of life. She shows the Bolivian way of cooking **sopa de mani** for example. She combines traditional products with non-traditional meals, like an avocado salad with roasted **chuño**, tomatoes, onions and a cilantro dressing.

Arteaga's dream of taking her vision to the next level and opening a restaurant is close to becoming real. She recently found a place and says that in three or four months people will be able to sit at one of Phayawi's tables. Phayawi 'will serve Bolivian food, but I can't tell you more, I am keeping it secret for the moment,' she says. The concept of Phayawi (which means kitchen in Aymara) is also to prove to young cooks in Bolivia that, 'there is a lot to do here... This is a moving country... Everything is yet to be built.' A lot of her Instagram followers have asked if she thinks it's worth moving back to Bolivia, to which she always answers 'Yes, you should come back and invest in Bolivia.'

Teaching and sharing her love of cooking is equally as important to Arteaga. This is why she is involved with the Alalay Foundation where she gives cooking lessons to children. The purpose of the foundation is 'to reverse the conditions of affective, economic, social and spiritual poverty for children and teenagers in high risks situations.' She volunteers two times a week, one time to cook with the boys, and the other time to cook with the girls. In one of her lessons for girls she taught them how to prepare greek yoghurt with fruits. Arteaga doesn't just teach her students how to cut and select the ingredients. She also teaches them why it is important to have clean hands before cooking and to be polite and respectful to others. She takes the children to different restaurants so they can discover new types of food. The next visit in her lesson plan, for example, is a Japanese restaurant where her students can try sushi and other dishes for the first time in their lives.

'WOMEN NEED TO EMPOWER EACH OTHER TO TAKE THE BOLIVIAN GASTRONOMY TO ANOTHER LEVEL.' —VALENTINA ARTEAGA

Even though Arteaga is a rising chef in Bolivia, being a woman in a man's world can sometimes be hard. A colleague once told her: 'You are pretty, you are going to be successful,' but comments like those only get on her nerves. One of the reasons she came back to Bolivia was to show people that women could be as successful as men in this trade. After all there are very successful female chefs in Bolivia, like Marsia Taha Mohamed, the current head chef at Gustu, or Gabriela Prudencio, chef at Propiedad Pública. Arteaga wants to inspire women, which she is already accomplishing through her Instagram account.

'Women need to demonstrate they are capable of doing what men are doing,'she says. 'Women need to empower each other to take the Bolivian gastronomy to another level.'

DIANA MÁLAGA

STITCHING THE CHALLENGING ROAD TOWARD THE RIGHTS OF TRANSGENDER BOLIVIANS

TEXT: SOPHIE BLOW / PHOTOS: SOPHIE BLOW / ADRIANA L. MURILLO A.

In the hustle and bustle of the market in La Paz that leads to the city's cemetery, it's hard to miss Diana Málaga's storefront. Bursting at the seams with vibrant designs inspired by the traditional **chola** dress, it's difficult not to be drawn in by the staggering array of meticulously-sewn outfits on display.

Eager customers who step into the store, excited to get their hands on one of Málaga's playful and creative spins on the traditional Bolivian dress, will find the store owner adorning sequins and beads to handmade garments ready to cater to the indigenous community of La Paz. Málaga is not only a successful designer and businesswoman with a degree in Social Communication, she is also the first transgender woman to identify as a *chola*.

Fashion has been more than a means for Málaga to express her passion for creative design. First and foremost, it was a means of survival, a way to pay the bills. Málaga turned to a career in fashion due to intense gender discrimination in the workplace in Bolivia, which made it almost impossible for her to secure a well-paid job in the country 'I have been unemployed,' Málaga explained, highlighting the vicious circle of poverty that the transgender community faces in Bolivia due to a lack of education.

Málaga's love for design has opened doors for her to speak to the press about her desire to eradicate public ignorance towards sexuality. As a university student at **UMSA** in 2001, she was forced to repeat a year of her studies after she legally changed her name. What should have been a simple administrative change, 'took a year to be legally accepted,' she says. 'My fight has been hard, but, yes, I have won.'

Throughout her transition, Málaga has been unjustly criticised by onlookers who, blinded by ignorance about sexuality, undermine her claim: 'I am a woman, I am going to have children.' 'Being a woman is not about having a vagina,' Málaga explains. 'Gender comes from your own self-awareness, your own brain.' Bombarded with negative comments from relatives and strangers alike, Málaga never gave up the fight to be her real self, Diana María Málaga, 'A transgender woman first and a *chola* second.'

Málaga drew public attention during her transformation as 'the first transexual to identify as a *chola*.' A *chola* (also known as a '*cholita*') is usually associated with a traditional dress and a unique silhouette. The outfit typically consists of a small bowler hat, long plaits with tassled cords tied in a knot at the ends, a shawl and a large, ankle-length skirt that maximises the size of the hips and creates the desired silhouette. Being a *chola*, is more than just dressing the part. It is an integral part of a woman's identity. It is a way of life. As Málaga says, 'A folklore dancer is not a *chola*.' For these dancers, the traditional dress is part of a persona they recreate to give life to Bolivian cultural heritage.

'I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR TRANSGENDER WOMEN.'
—DIANA MÁLAGA

A woman usually identifies as a *chola* by heritage. It is an identity that is passed down through the maternal bloodline. Málaga's mother did not wear traditional dress like the women in the family who had come before her, but when her grandmother, a *chola*, invited Málaga to a party where she was to wear traditional dress, Málaga became inspired by this indigenous Bolivian look.

The decision to be a *chola* was a fashion choice, but 'it started as a costume,' Málaga points out. As a 1.78m tall transgender woman, she quickly became aware that it would be a real challenge to find a *cholita* ensemble for a woman of her stature. Before long, she found herself behind a sewing machine manufacturing her first **pollera**, a sombrero, a shawl and a complete *cholita* outfit. This was the start of Málaga's journey of transformation as a *chola*. What started as a fashion choice quickly evolved into a core part of her identity as a Bolivian woman.

So what does it mean to be a *cholita* today in Bolivia? Following decades of racial discrimination, the word '*chola*' has taken on pejorative connotations that echo Bolivia's history of oppression towards indigenous communities. As a result, the term '*cholita*' emerged, using the suffix '-ita' in Spanish as a diminutive. Although '*cholita*' is often considered a term of endearment for indigenous women, Málaga doesn't see it this way. 'I am not a *cholita* because it is a diminutive term, on a small scale,' she says. Even though, the word '*chola*' is largely considered a discriminatory term, Málaga has 'worked hard to shape this word.' Like her tireless efforts to protect the rights of the transgender community, she has also struggled for a future without prejudice towards indigenous people in Bolivia.

Today, Málaga has a home and a husband to whom she has been married for seven years. She hosts a radio programme, has been interviewed on TV and hosts a television show on the channel '11 Red Uno de Bolivia.' She uses her status within the LGBT community to provoke crucial discussions about prominent social issues in Bolivia, including domestic violence and human rights. She is a true icon in the LGBT community of La Paz, with a website that attracts visitors who eager to learn more about her journey as well as opponents to her cause.

So what's next for Diana Málaga? As a woman with aspirations of securing greater rights for the transgender community in Bolivia, a move towards the world of politics could be in the cards. She hopes to make a positive change in her community by working tirelessly for gender rights in Bolivia and by fighting for greater public acceptance of all genders rather than settling for widespread gender tolerance. One of her main objectives for the future is to help redefine gender, not as a set of physical characteristics, but as an emotional and mental awareness of who you really are.

FASHION BLOGGING **IN BOLIVIA**

IT'S NOT ALL CHAMPAGNE AND CAVORTING WITH MODELS, BUT IT'S STILL GREAT GIG

TEXT: SASHA VASQUEZ / PHOTO: JOSÉ ROLANDO RUIZ

'Blogger' is a word so common nowadays that it's hard to believe that less than five years ago most people in Bolivia had never heard of it before. Nowadays though, it has become an overused but highly misunderstood word.

A few years ago I slowly started to learn about what fashion blogs were. I became fascinated by the one-on-one vibe that bloggers had with their readers. The tips, the tutorials, the life hacks, the outfit inspiration – it was a real approach to fashion, none of that overpriced, unapproachable glossy couture I was used to seeing in magazines.
The only problem I saw, was that most of the bloggers I followed were from the United States or Europe, so even if they wore affordable brands like H&M or Zara, most of the things portrayed in their posts were impossible to get here in Bolivia. That's where it all started: I wanted to make fashion available to people like me – people that live in Bolivia, who live busy lives and want affordable fashion for real people. Thus, **Pilchas y Pintas** was born as a creative outlet where I could share fashion inspiration, tips and tutorials.

In my first year of blogging, I made nothing. Instead of being able to monetise my blog, I encountered only raised eyebrows, weird looks and a lot of, 'a fashion what?'. I got used to having to explain exactly what it was I did every time I met someone new. Blogging was such a new industry that back then, even I wasn't sure what this new 'job' was all about. Of course, I didn't see *Pilchas y Pintas* as a job until my third year, when I received an email from a possible client. It had finally come, the day when someone was willing to pay me for blogging. The excitement came along with many questions, like 'How much should I charge?', 'How many posts would be required?', 'How many photos should I include?'. In the end, that first job ended up being tremendously underpaid and required much more work than it was worth.

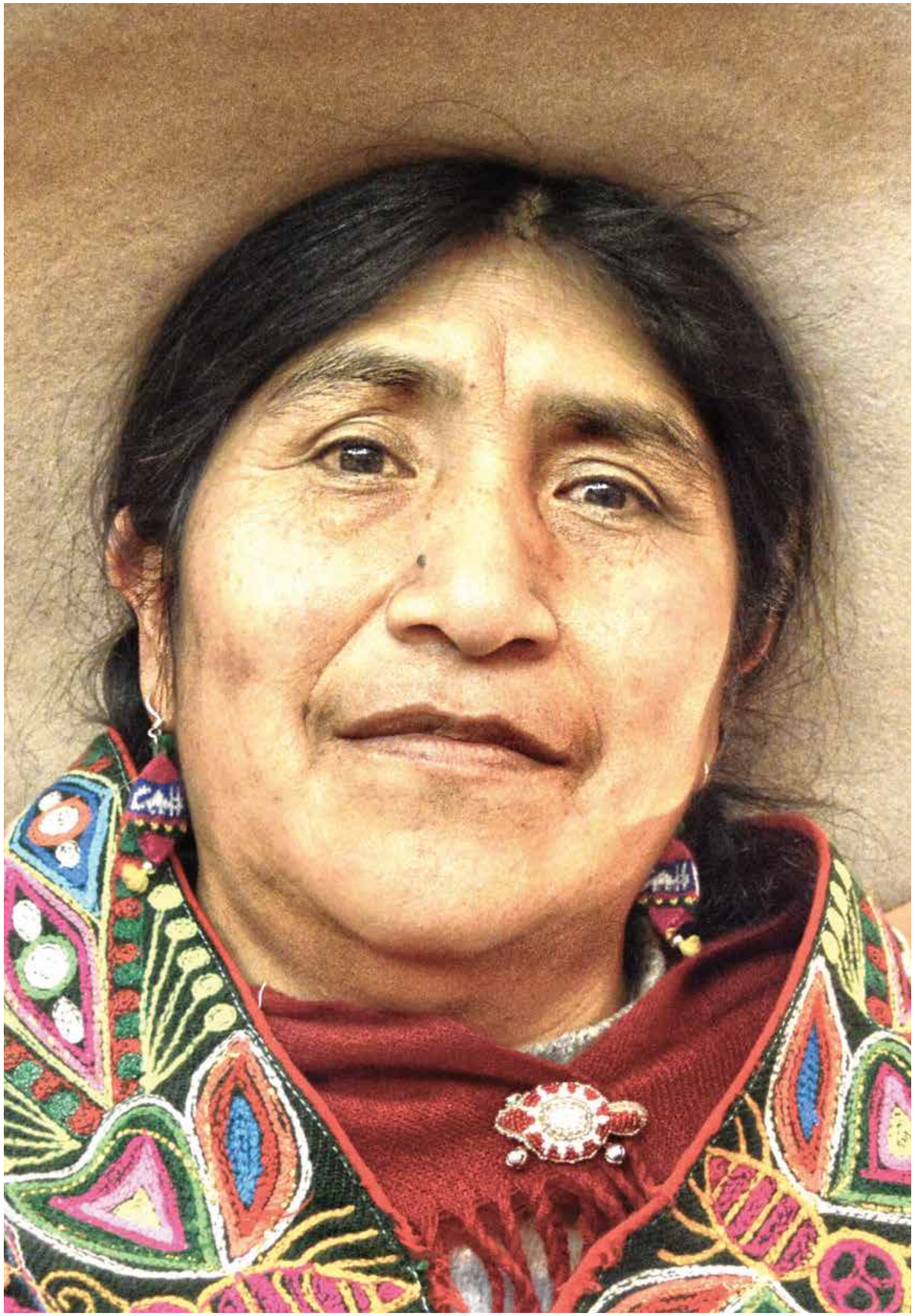
It took me another couple of years before I began to really understand the amount of work we bloggers put into our content should never be taken for granted. Most of the time it is fear and self-doubt that make us forget that every blog post requires time to brainstorm, write, shoot, upload and promote.

The blogosphere has evolved and expanded quite a lot since when I started. When I began blogging there were only three fashion bloggers in Bolivia, today there are many more. Different styles and approaches to fashion have flooded our social media and it's amazing to see that Bolivian people have become more interested in the content created by national fashion bloggers. We have evolved from being the weird girls taking photos in the middle of the street, to actual business women (and men) who have a voice in the Bolivian fashion industry. We share the latest trends, showcase the hottest stores and attend the biggest events. It's quite amazing, if I dare to say so myself, but it's not all fun and games.

The growth and demand for bloggers and influencers in the Bolivian fashion industry have opened many doors for us bloggers, but not all of those doors have nice prizes behind them. Like all small industries, blogging can be amazingly ruthless. There's a lot of competition for likes and followers, to find the best photoshoot locations and to get the biggest clients. It can be very easy to get swept up into this cutthroat circle. Inevitably, this creates a lot of pressure, especially considering that blogging is usually a one-person job. If the blog does well, then hurrah for you. But if it does poorly, you are the only person to blame. Everything that happens, both good and bad, is 100 percent on your shoulders, and this can be a heavy weight to bear.

On the other hand, many clothing brands still don't understand what bloggers are and how they differ from influencers or brand ambassadors. Even though they are eager to work with us, they still don't quite get how to do it correctly. The idea behind fashion blogging is quickly misinterpreted and with this, the authenticity that fashion bloggers are used to being known for is starting to slowly fade away.

Like all things in Bolivia, the excitement and popularity of things grows as fast as a badly poured **Paceña** on a hot, summer afternoon, and then fizzes out just as quickly. People here get bored of fads and soon move onto the next one. But not all is lost, and even though the blogging trend might slowly lose its power, fashion (and non-fashion) bloggers who have a genuine voice and a true essence are here to stay. The key is to focus on useful and real content. Yes, there will be ads and publicity along the way, but as long as you don't lose yourself in it, you should be fine.



THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY

TEXT: XENIA ELSAESSER / PHOTO:

At primary school I sat an exam where I was asked to name the head of the family. To me, my mother was head of the family: she did everything, she supervised the harvest, the selling, the sowing of seeds, she was the head because of the lifestyle we had. I put her name down. But when the teacher saw my paper she took me by the ear: "The head of the family is the father. Never forget that."'

Our Cover: Esperanza Huanca

Bolivian Express editorial
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full editorial @ www.bolivianexpress.org

BOLIVIAN FASHION **TAKES PARIS BY STORM**

CHOLITAS IN THE CITY OF LIGHT

TEXT: MARIE DE LANTIVY / PHOTOS: IVAN RODRIGUEZ PETKOVIC

The **cholita**, or the **mujer de pollera**, is an iconic representation of Bolivia and La Paz. Bolivian designer Ana Palza, who makes jewellery and clothes for *mujeres de pollera*, accompanied six *cholita* models to Paris for a three-day event organised by the Cartier Foundation in October. In an event space designed by famed Bolivian architect Freddy Mamani – whose **cholets** in El Alto have gained worldwide acclaim as of late – these women modelled traditional Bolivian clothing in the capital of haute couture.

Palza, who has created jewellery for 19 years, began to focus on *cholita* fashion about five years ago. She noted that most jewellery was too expensive to be worn by participants in La Paz's extravagant **Gran Poder** – pieces were frequently stolen during the wildly chaotic celebration. Palza wanted to create a line of affordable but elegant jewellery. So instead of using gold or silver, she created pieces using pearls, finding inspiration from the style of the *cholitas*. Palza then started making clothes after realising that there were no traditional *cholita* wedding gowns.

Palza's collaboration with Mamani started six months ago when she was contacted by the Cartier Foundation to organise a fashion show with *mujeres de polleras* in Paris. The impetus for the show happened two years ago, when Mamani had been invited to build a *cholet*-style installation inside the Cartier Foundation's Paris location. But a *cholet* without a *cholita* is nothing if not incomplete. Thus the fashion show.

The three-day event began with a traditional **challa**, a blessing ceremony performed by a Bolivian **yatiri**). The next day, the *mujeres de polleras* posed in the streets of Paris in their traditional raiment. On the third day, the fashion show took place.

The show was divided into five parts. The first showed the rural origin of the *mujer de pollera*, and how *polleras* used to be made with sheep's wool. The second part featured vintage *polleras* made of cotton, less colourful than those worn today. Then Palza paid tribute to Mamani by exhibiting clothes against a background of photos of *cholets* by French photographer Christian Lombardi. The fourth part highlighted the vicuña – an undomesticated relative of the llama that produces some of the softest wool in the world – with old and new takes on the traditional Andean wedding shawl. The finale was a tribute to *Gran Poder*, the epic May-June **paceño** Andean Catholic celebration. For Palza, authenticity was essential. 'We wouldn't have played any **morenadas** from [the carnival of] Oruro,' she said. 'They had to be from *Gran Poder*.' The head of Cartier described it as 'full of seduction, charm, authority, but also freedom – very beautiful.'

Sandra Zulema Patzi Mayta, one of the models, was glad to have been able to show the fashion world how Bolivian women dress, but she said that she and her fellow models had to constantly remind people that they were not from Peru, but from Bolivia. She feels that *cholitas* in Bolivia still face discrimination. 'Everywhere else, people want to take pictures with us, but especially in La Paz, we are not valued,' she said.

When asked about the future, Palza is vague. 'I don't know, I am working gradually,' she said. 'I am not planning anything. I am not doing this to make money or to win – it is a real passion.' She has been invited to Spain to show her designs, but unless she can bring genuine *cholita* models, she said she'll decline. Her creations are for the *mujer de pollera* to wear, not for a model to appropriate. 'If we travel somewhere, we are bringing the *mujer de pollera* with us,' she insists. 'It is the woman who represents what we do. This is what we show, the entire woman. – with her essence... This is not only about the clothes – the *mujer of pollera* is not an item – this is about the woman.'

‘THIS IS NOT ONLY ABOUT THE CLOTHES – THE *MUJER OF POLLERA* IS NOT AN ITEM – THIS IS ABOUT THE WOMAN.’
—ANA PALZA

PACHAMAMA

BOLIVIA HAS ENSHRINED HER RIGHTS INTO LAW

TEXT: BX TEAM / ILLUSTRATION: HUGO L.CUÉLLAR

In December 2010, the Bolivian government passed Law 71, which recognises the inherent rights of Mother Earth, or **Pachamama**. It’s a curious political move today, when spiritual and religious content is usually stripped out of most nation-states’ legal doctrines. But 10,000 years ago, this wouldn’t be outside the pale. Indeed, during that time of agricultural development, many agrarian cultures worshipped a feminine earth deity. Fast-forward to the present day, and both *Pachamama* and Christian traditions are celebrated simultaneously in Bolivia in a syncretism of Andean and Catholic beliefs.

Pacha means ‘time and space’, among other things, and *Mama* means ‘mother.’ In Andean cosmology, she is the highest power on earth and the offspring of the creator of the universe, Viracocha. *Pachamama* represents the feminine and fertility, and her husband, Inti, is the sun. Their sacred numbers are one and four, respectively, totalling five – the most sacred number in the Andean **cosmovisión**.

GLOSSARY

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API CON PASTEL	A purple corn drink traditionally eaten with a fried cheese pasty
AYLLU	Traditional form of community in the Andes
CAMBA	From eastern Bolivia
CASERITA	Term referring to someone selling or buying something
CHACHA-WARMI	It refers to a code of conduct based on duality and complementarity which are considered the pillars of the family and of Andean communities
CHALLA	Traditional blessing ritual
CHAPACA	From the city of Tarija
CHOLA	Bolivian woman of indigenous decent, also referred to as cholita
CHOLET	Bolivian architectural style of ornamented buildings
CHUÑO	Freeze-dried potato traditionally made by Quechua and Aymara communities of Bolivia
CHUQUISAQUEÑA	From the city of Sucre
COCHALA	From Cochabamba
CORONELA	Unoficial term to refer to a women coronel
COSMOVISIÓN	World view
GORDITA	'Fatty', sometimes used as a term of endearment
GRAN PODER	Religious celebration paying homage to El Señor del Gran Poder or Jesus Christ
KOLLA	From western Bolivia
MI TELEFERICO	The cable-car system in the city of La Paz
MICROS	Big buses
MINA SIGLO XX	'Mine 20th Century', name of the mine syndicate
MORENADA	Music and dance style from the Bolivian Andes characterised by a mixture of African and Indigenous elements
MUJER DE POLLERA	Refers to a woman (cholita) wearing the traditional multilayered skirts
PACEÑA	Popular brand of beer
PACEÑO/A	From La Paz
PACHAMAMA	Mother Earth
PALLIRI	Women dedicated to rescuing ore among the waste or clearings
PILCHAS	Clothes
PINTAS	The way someone looks
POLLERA	Multilayered skirts worn by cholitas
SOPA DE MANI	Peanut soup
TRUFIS	Taxis with a fixed route
UMSA	Universidad Mayor de San Andrés', Public university in La Paz
YATIRI	Medical practitioners and community healers among the Aymara of Bolivia


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25 DE NOVIEMBRE

Día Internacional de la Eliminación de la Violencia contra la Mujer

El Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia ratifica su compromiso de lucha contra todo tipo de violencia hacia la mujer y lo hace a partir de normativas que, tomando como base la Constitución Política del Estado (CPE), establecen medidas de prevención, eliminación y sanción contra la violencia de género.

- Art. 15 de la Constitución Política del Estado
- Ley 348 - Para Garantizar a las Mujeres una Vida libre de Violencia (reconoce 16 tipos de violencia)
- Decreto de creación del "Comité de Lucha contra toda forma de Violencia hacia las Mujeres" (D.S. Nº 1363 de 2012)
- Ley 263 - Integral contra la Trata y Tráfico de Personas
- Ley 243 - Contra el Acoso y la Violencia Política hacia las Mujeres
- Ley 045 - Contra el Racismo y toda forma de Discriminación

¡Todas y todos unidos en contra de la VIOLENCIA!

Ministerio de COMUNICACIÓN
Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia