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September 2024 Spotlight

Águila,
the story of
Maria Cristina
Moroles
&
Santuario
Arco Iris



Águila is the story of a little Mexican girl in Dallas who survived poverty, a rapist's pregnancy, subsequent foster care, life on the streets, and a deadly hepatitis epidemic. Despite all of that, she went on to found the rugged, Ozark mountain sanctuary for women and children, where she has lived since 1976.

Arco Iris, Rainbow Land, now Santuario Arco Iris, is one of many women's land communities. It is remarkably rare in being founded by women of color. Later, she became the steward of all of Sassafras Land, more than 450 acres in the Arkansas mountains that she renamed Arco Iris Earth Care Project. She protected it in a non-profit.

Maria Cristina told part of this story in the short memoir published in the SLFA Herstory Project's *Landykes of the South*, volume 98 of *Sinister Wisdom* (2015). With this September Spotlight, we share much more about the fascinating story she has been able to publish.

She developed the surprising friendship and collaboration with a woman from academia, Dr. Lauri Umansky, a former dean at Arkansas State University. Together they created the memoir, *Águila*, sharing in much greater detail Maria Cristina's life, the land and the sanctuary it became.

It also traces her journey as a curandera and shaman who in recent years was elevated to the status signified by the name *Águila* (AH-ghee-la), eagle, her shaman name and highest rank as a shamanic healer. This name is, she writes, "both a gift and a burden," as it is a high responsibility. We invite you to begin to understand her journey.

[Read the September Spotlight](#)

You are invited to participate:

Who inspired you to lesbian feminism?

**Send us the name of your most significant Shero
with a brief reason why she inspires you.**

Both she and you can remain anonymous if you want (just say so) since we will PUBLISH these here on our SLFAHP website.

Send submissions today to: slfainspired@gmail.com. Here's an example:

Rose Norman got her inspiration from Nancy Finley. "At the time, Nancy Finley was the chair of the Sociology Department at my university. She said, 'Let's see who might be interested in starting a women's studies program.'

"She made feminism seductive, and she opened my eyes to structural causes of oppression. She walks the talk in all aspects of her life."

The Southern Lesbian Feminist Activist Herstory Project

We collect, archive, and celebrate oral and written stories of unsung, Southern, lesbian-feminist activists during the second half of the twentieth century. We are proud of our contributions to lesbian culture, strengthened by our collective voices.

Many of us recognized that the lesbian-feminist voices of Southern lesbians had been omitted or marginalized in mainstream literature of the LGBTQ movement as well as from feminist history. We are the antidote to this omission. We worked with Duke University to set up archives, did interviews all over the south, and eventually collaborated with Julie Enszer to publish 6 issues of Sinister Wisdom, full of all our stories. Now we maintain our website and update it monthly, as you hear about through this newsletter. We are still gathering more Southern lesbian stories, interviewing, writing, editing, tracking and networking.

We are always ready to welcome new collaborators! If you would like to join the SLFAHP group, email us at SLFAHerstoryProject@gmail.com.

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