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Voices from the Ancestors

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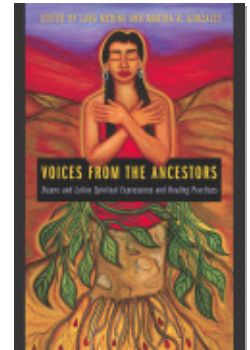
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The Day After the Election

Protecting Body, Mind, and Spirit

SANDRA M. PACHECO

WEDNESDAY: NOVEMBER 9, 2016

I wake up exhausted from staying up late the night before to watch the coverage of the elections. I remain in disbelief at who the Electoral College has elected to be the next president of the United States. Slightly numb, I begin to read the rapid, frantic posts on Facebook as people collectively release their pain, anger, and frustration. My body is activated; every cell in my being knows what is coming our way. The remnants of intergenerational trauma that reside in my body know the emboldened hate that is to come. I experienced it recently, in the time leading up to the election. Sitting at a restaurant in Oakland, California, enjoying breakfast with a friend I had not seen in months, our conversation in Spanish was abruptly interrupted by a white man sitting at the table next to us. He yelled at us to “speak English” and to “go back where you came from.” With the election results, more of this is to come, and worse. I cry today, not for myself, but for my ancestors, all our ancestors who endured hatred and violence. I cry for all who will be targeted in this new era. At my home altar, filled with pictures of my ancestors, I cry more. I light the candles. I hear my grandmother’s words, “*no te dejes*.” Her unconquerable spirit runs through me. Yes, I got this.

I walk out to my garden with my *sahumador* and prepare the copal. As the charcoal disc heats up, I spread my arms out to the side and look up toward the sun, “*Gracias, Creador*.” I turn to face sacred mountain Tuyshtak, now known

as Mount Diablo. I give my respects. I touch the ground and honor the Ohlone ancestors of Sogorea Te and Ohlone land that I live on. I cut roses with permission and take them to my Virgen de Guadalupe, “*cuidanos, por favor.*”

Sahumador now ready, I add copal and I offer smoke. I begin by smudging my body from the top of my head to the soles of my feet. I walk over to my *plantitas* and with permission ask for support from the “Grandmother plant,” which we also call *pericón* or *tagetes lucida*. The Grandmother plant is one of the most powerful healing plants. She helps all plants near her to grow strong and she teaches them how to offer their best medicine. I ask permission of her and cut some branches and thank her. I cut enough to use now and to keep with me today. I draw the Grandmother plant to my face and deeply breathe into my lungs the intense scent, making her part of my body. I thank Creator and the Grandmother plant again for the medicine.

I use the Grandmother plant over my face, neck, head, arms, chest, abdomen, and legs, like I would with a washcloth, to clean my body and spirit. Like a powerful sponge, the Grandmother plant pulls the toxic energy from me. I am reminded that this is not mine to carry and to open up so the plantita can pull the *veneno* of white supremacist, capitalistic, patriarchal hate that has landed on my spirit heavier than usual. I feel the tears return and let them be. I finish and offer the now spent plantita back to La Madre Tierra.

I go inside and prepare a tea and get ready for work. I will need to care for my adrenal system today, so I mix nettles, tulsi, oat tops, oat straw, and mint. For my heart, I will add hawthorn berries. I add the mix to boiling water and turn off the flame and cover the pot. While the tea seeps until it is at room temperature, I tend to my usual morning routines. After showering, I protect my body energetically using *agua florida* and yarrow. I will need more than usual today. I select my clothes. Today will definitely be a huipil day, a long huipil with an underskirt and my Tejana boots. Beneath my huipil I will wear my red woven *faja* around my waist to protect my vulnerable center, the *ombligo*. I select a necklace that has a mini *nicho* pendant with a picture of my grandmother, Doña Mague, the strongest woman I have known. I select earrings gifted to me by Alcatraz Occupation veteran Shirley Guevara of the Mono tribe, during our occupation of Sogorea Te. I put on my Huichol-beaded cuff bracelet with images of white flowers for healing. I put on my silver bracelet made by a Taos elder—one of the last preserving the tradition of sand casting. And last, I put on my rebozo from Chiapas. My body will be my altar as I move in the world today.

I return to the kitchen to drink my tea and sit by the window to watch the humming birds. I think of Huitzilopochtli, the “humming bird of the south.” I hold on to the complex mythology as a shield. It’s almost time to get on the road. I grab my work bag and prepare it. A bottle of Sage Shield spray made by one of my herbalist teachers, Atava Garcia Swiecicki, goes in it to use when needed in place of copal. I pack a yarrow tincture I made to use for creating energetic boundaries. I tie the remaining branches of the Grandmother plant to the strap on my bag. Her medicine will continue to help during challenging meetings. I walk toward the door and glance one more time at my home altar, the flame of the candle reminding me that I am deeply connected to the Divine, to Creator, to Cosmos. The pictures of so many strong women who came before me remind me that I also carry their intergenerational wisdom, love, and strength. I open the door and smile to myself. I got this. We got this.