

Rage & El Llanto as Medicine

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I WAS THREE years old when I first experienced the feeling of rage. My parents placed me in daycare, and I clearly remember being upset: “Why am I here? I don’t know these other children or adults. I don’t feel safe.” Yes, I clearly remember feeling and thinking these words.

In particular, I remember “naptime,” when all the other children, about a dozen of them, were placed on little green cots. Some were very obedient, others hesitated a bit, and others cried but were eventually coaxed (threatened) into lying down. I remember one of the daycare workers saying, “Tienen que hacer caso” (you have to do as you’re told). She said this as she slapped a yardstick on her palm. It was not uncommon for schools to use rulers to discipline children back then, in the early 1980s.

Most of the children obeyed her, each keeping one eye open and sobbing quietly.

I, on the other hand, was not having it. I knew this was not a safe place. I let out a scream and began bawling. This is the first llanto I can recollect. I remember it because it was a visceral response as much as an emotional one. I stood there, all two-and-a-half feet of me, screaming to the top of my lungs with my hands balled into fists. I was NOT going down.

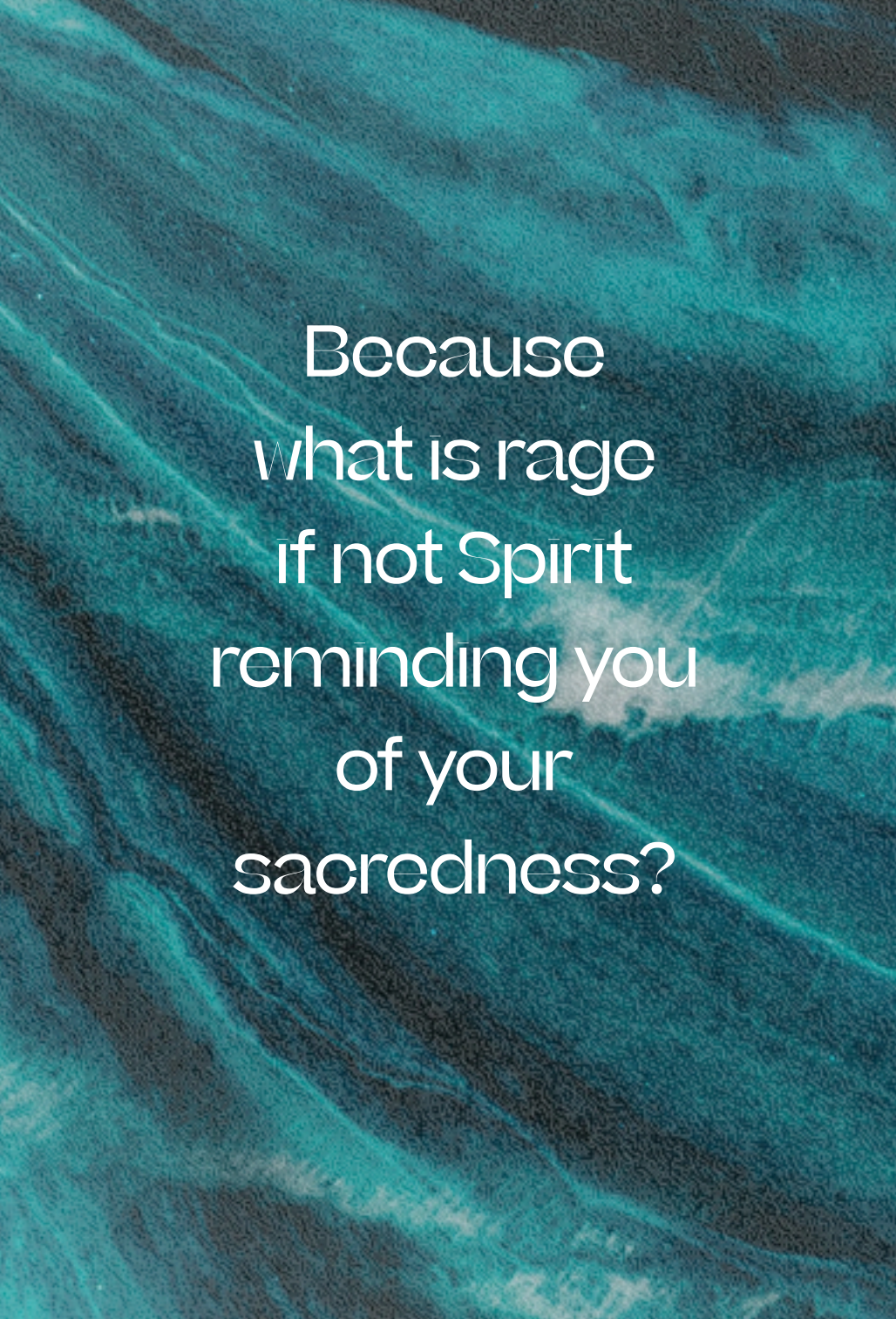
I remember screaming even louder when one of the caregivers approached me. Deep down in the pit of my stomach, I knew intuitively that I needed to protect myself. The other children began crying too. I was afraid, and I was ENRAGED.

The daycare workers called my father to pick me up because I was being “disruptive.” When he arrived, I told him in a firm, tearful, two-word toddler sentence: “Tu cuida” (you care). Thankfully, my maternal grandmother came to live with us shortly



Image credit: Tiana Crispino

Tiana C.



Because
what is rage
if not Spirit
reminding you
of your
sacredness?

thereafter to raise my brother, my sister, and me. Sadly, however, this wasn't the last time I would feel unsafe in my life.

I THINK OF how many times my rage actually protected me—how it was there to inform me that I needed to protect myself. I turned forty-one earlier this year, and I am now realizing that I may have less time in front of me than what is behind me. I reflect on my chamaca self (my younger self) and how anger and rage sustained me during that stage of my life. How my pain and grief had manifested into a “don’t mess with me” attitude and “I don’t need anyone” mindset.

I talk to my younger self at times, and I wish she knew that her anger was actually a trauma response and not her identity—that, although things would not get any easier, she would heal and become stronger and more resilient. That there is courage in softness, and that the right people would protect and honor her sacred tenderness. That her “sensitivity” was actually a gift, un don, that would support others in their healing. That her llanto was her spirit teaching her the art of el desahogo (relief). Her ability to feel so deeply, like a vast ocean, would later allow her to teach others how to rescue themselves from drowning.

I ask my younger self for forgiveness, for giving too much and expecting too little from others. I also have so much gratitude for her—for her courage, for her stubbornness, for her steadfastness, and for her wild daydreams. Back then, in the midst of recklessness and sometimes chaotic and violent states, I still had the wisdom to trust this small yet growing part of me. Whether the trust came from my intuition, ancestral knowledge, or spiritual guidance,

no sé, but I remember always thinking, “I deserve more.”

And now, in this season of my life, I feel a different sense of grief: the grief of having to release the young, wounded versions of me, which—even though these once sustained me and kept me alive—must die if I am to birth the next season of my life. What will sustain me now? Who am I if not this scared and angry version of me? Who and what is on the other side?

When the pandemic started, I began to go outside every morning, talk to Source, and hear “surrender to what is, and trust what is to come.” Although my bones feel heavier and heavier every day, something in my spirit feels young again. Something has been renewed. Maybe it is the change of seasons approaching. Maybe it is the sun’s warmth. Maybe it is the promise of abundance after an excruciatingly prolonged period of scarcity.

I think of three-year-old me often—and how wise and courageous she was. How she trusted herself and surrendered to her power. *I am proud of you, little mamas, for standing your ground. You deserve all that is good, safe, and sacred in this world.* I will walk into this new season a bit more softly, with gratitude and surrender.

But don’t get it twisted; my rage will be honored, and I will use it to protect myself and others. Because what is rage if not Spirit reminding you of your sacredness? Even roses, with their beauty and powerful medicine, have thorns.

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I have no doubt in the power of art. Creative thinkers are needed to progress ideas and movements forward. Art is not neutral, and artists have the choice to create for a purpose.

—Suzy González
(p. 49)