

Let Us Be the Healing Of the Wound: The Coyolxauhqui Imperative—la sombra y el sueño*

Gloria Anzaldúa



The day the towers fell, me sentí como Coyolxauhqui, la luna. Algo me agarró y me sacudió, frightening la sombra (soul)

* Fragments from the essay of the same title published in *One Wound for Another: Una herida por otra. Testimonios de Latin@s in the U.S. through Cyberspace* (11 de septiembre de 2001-11 de marzo de 2002), Claire Joysmith and Clara Lomas, eds. (Mexico City: UNAM-CISAN/ Colorado College/ Whittier, 2005), pp. 92-103.

Drawing by Héctor Ponce de León.

out of my body. I fell in pieces into that pitch-black brooding place. Each violent image of the towers collapsing, transmitted live all over the world then repeated a thousand times on TV, sucked the breath out of me, each image etched on my mind's eye. Wounded, I fell into shock, cold and clammy. The moment fragmented me, dissociating me from myself. Arresting every vital organ in me, it would not release me.

Bodies on fire, bodies falling through the sky, bodies pummeled and crushed by stone and

steel, los cuerpos trapped and suffocating became our bodies. As we watched we too fell, todos caímos. What occurred on September 11, 2001 to the people in the four hijacked airplanes, the twin World Trade Center towers of NYC, and the Pentagon happened to us, too. I couldn't detach from the victims and survivors and their pain. This wounding opened like a gash and widened until a deep chasm separated me from those around me.

In the weeks following este tremendo arrebato, susto trussed me in its numbing sheath. Suspended in limbo in that in-between space, nepantla, I wandered through my days on autopilot, feeling disconnected from the events of my life. My house whispered and moaned. Within its walls the wind howled. Like la Llorona lost and alone, I was arrested in susto, helplessness, falling, sinking. Swamped with sadness, I mourned all the dead, counted our losses, reflected on the part our country played in the tragedy and how I was personally responsible. It was difficult to acknowledge, much less express, the depth of my feelings—instead me lo tragué.

Now months later, I'm still trying to move through my depression and into another state of mind. I'm still trying to escape my shadow beasts (desconocimientos): numbness, anger, and disillusionment. Besides dealing with my own personal shadow, I must contend with the collective shadow in the psyches of my culture and nation—we always inherit the past problems of family, community, and nation. I stare up at the moon, Coyolxauhqui, and its light in the darkness. I seek a healing image, one that re-connects me to others. I seek the positive shadow that I've also inherited.

With the imperative to “speak” esta herida abierta (this open wound) before it drowns out all voices, the feelings I'd buried begin unfurling. Vulnerable once more I'm clawed by the talons of grief. I take my sorrow for a walk along the bay near my home in Santa Cruz. With the surf pounding in my ears and the wind's forlorn howl, it feels like even the sea is grieving.

I struggle to “talk” from the wound's gash, make sense of the deaths and destruction, and pull the pieces of my life back together. I yearn to pass on to the next generation the spiritual activism I've inherited from my cultures. If I object to my government's act of war I cannot remain silent. To do so is to be complicitous. But sadly we are all accomplices.

My job as an artist is to bear witness to what haunts us, to step back and attempt to see the pattern in these events (personal and societal), and how we can repair el daño (the damage) by using the imagination and its visions. I believe in the transformative power and medicine of art. As I see it, this country's real battle is with its shadow—its racism, propensity for violence, rapacity for consuming, neglect of its responsibility to global communities and the environment, and unjust treatment of dissenters and the disenfranchised, especially people of color. As an artist I feel compelled to expose this shadow side which the mainstream media and government denies. In order to understand our complicity and responsibility we must look at the shadow.

* * *

As we thrash about in our inner and external struggling grounds trying to get our bearings, we totter between two paths. The path of desconocimiento leads human consciousness into ignorance, fear, and hatred. It succumbs to righteous judgement and withdraws into separation and domination, pushing most of us into retaliatory acts of further rampage which beget more violence. This easier path uses force and violence to socially construct our nation. Conocimiento, the more difficult path, leads to awakening, insights, understandings, realizations, and courage, and the motivation to engage in concrete ways that have the potential to bring us into compassionate interactions. Self-righteousness creates the abyss; conocimiento builds bridges across it. En estos tiempos de la Llorona

we must use creativity to jolt us into awareness of our spiritual/political problems and other major global tragedies so we can repair el daño. The Coyolxauhqui imperative is to heal and achieve integration. When fragmentations occur you fall apart and feel as though you've been expelled from paradise. Coyolxauhqui is my symbol for the necessary process of dismemberment and fragmentation, of seeing that self or the situations you're embroiled in differently. It is also my symbol for reconstruction and reframing, one that allows for putting the pieces together in a new way. The Coyolxauhqui imperative is an ongoing process of making and unmaking. There is never any resolution, just the process of healing.

* * *

What we do now counts even more than the frightening event, close call, shock, violation, or loss that made cracks in our worlds. En estos tiempos of loss, fear, and confusion the human race must delve into its cenotes (wells) of collective wisdom, both ancient and modern. Though only a small percent of the world's six billion people have achieved a high level of awareness, the collective consciousness of these people has the power to counterbalance the negativity of the rest of humanity.¹ Ultimately each of us has the potential to change the sentience of the world.

In addition to community-building we can transform our world by imagining it differently, dreaming it passionately via all our senses, and

willing it into creation. As we think inspiring, positive, life-generating thoughts and embody these thoughts in every act we perform, we can gradually change the mood of our days, the habits of years, and the beliefs of a lifetime. Changing the thoughts and ideas (the "stories") we live by and their limiting beliefs (including the national narrative of supreme entitlement) will enable us to extend our hand to others con el corazón con razón en la mano. Individually and collectively we can begin to share strategies on peaceful co-existence y desparramar (spread) conocimientos. Each of us can make a difference. By bringing psychological understanding and using spiritual approaches in political activism² we can stop the destruction of our moral, compassionate humanity. Empowered, we'll be motivated to organize, achieve justice, and begin to heal the world. **MM**

NOTES

¹ According to the *Power of Peace Newsletter*, 1-11-02, <peacebreath.com>, 1/10th of 1% (.01%) unified by a single cause can change the consciousness of the world. This statistic has been recorded by prophets and sages of times past, and recently by the research of David R. Hawkins. In his book, *Power vs. Force*, he synthesizes years of research by assigning vibrational energy values to different attributes. Fear is measured at 200; love at 500; peace at 600. He has shown that one person at level 500 (love) can counterbalance 750,000 people of a lower vibration. One person at level 700 can raise the consciousness of 70 million people.

² Many posts to activists listservs offer guidance. Others like the Women's Spiritual Network: <http://spiritweb.org/Spirit/newsletters.html?news=women-network>, offer spiritual approaches to activism.

