

A Letter to the Young and Different

Timothy Aaron Medina

“Donde tu vas?” says my Titi with a Puerto Rican accent.

“A fuera?” She points quickly towards our land outside her window.

“Sí Titi, voy a salir.” Walking closer to the sound of rushing hot water, my culture reminds me to ask for a “bendicion” when kissing my elders.

I’ll even wait patiently for a response ...

“Bendicion, Titi!”

“Blessing, Aunty.” The sounds of dishes in the sink are louder than me, it seems...

“Titi!”

“Ah?”

“Dije bendicion.”

“Aiii!” Quickly turning off the water, she dries her hands on the kitchen towel hanging on the fridge door by the sink, then:

Arms wide and heart open, Titi walks towards me, excited to squeeze me tightly with her arms.

“MMMMM! Tan bello!”

First pressing her head on my chest, then grabbing my forehead,

too fast for me to think, she gifts me with a big kiss to protect my crown.

The sound of her kiss makes me laugh. “AHHH! Dios de bendiga, mi amor.”

“Adios, Titi!”

“Adios, Nene, diviértete a salvo!”

“Sí Titi! Adios!”

Okay, I’m outside, now what do I do again? Oh yeah, Titi said,

“Nombre cada roca;

Saluda a cada árbol;

No estabas aquí antes que ellos.”

“Name every rock, greet every tree, you weren’t here before them.”

Walking through the green grove forest in Puerto Rico I go;

Don’t stop feeling, say the sharp blades of grass touching my ankles;

Surroundings can tickle an emotion;

Giving a smile back leaves keys to lessons.

“When seasons are dry, ask for water, if the rain doesn’t come, let it be, but still grow.”

Two birds stop in front of me;

“Don’t just call people your friend;

Following others can lead to dead ends.”

Flying away as they sing,

“Stay a child and say what you want from within.”

I don't want to walk in my chancletas any more ...
Feeling my soles squishing from ground to feet;
"Don't try to let yourself become solid,
Clay too needs to be accepting;
Mimic earth and expand."

More green appears;
A tree stays still, and may seem as though it has disappeared;
"Branches holding dear to what grows;
But dead leaves fall, it's time to let worries go."

Ready to sip from the fresh water river;
Water moving slow enough for hands to bowl my thirst at the creek.
"How can a problem be fixed?"

Every blade of grass, bird, tree and river in its place;
Still standing on my land without chanclas;
Learning to listen, as I step towards my calling;
Keeping sound advice around my neck;
The creator beautifies my life.

I am a Taíno, taught to
"Practice, practice even after discovering what is hidden."
Keep vulnerable to inner-self;
Even if skeptical and entirely unsure,
my life teachers tell me,
"Get ready to unlearn, keep your surroundings around you, hold onto this power to discern."

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