

A CHICANA PRAYER: What I Wish My Ancestors Would Have Told My Ancestors

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On August 10, 2020,¹ warm light entered my home from the sunrise
And I remembered my love for this place
And I longed for belonging.
I remembered the words,
“Cantaremos el alba, ya viene el día, le damos gracias, Ave Maria”
Words from a sacred space, an inheritance from a Spanish and Mexican lineage.
Raised in the 70s in Mora, NM hearing words like La Raza Unida and
Chicana Power,
I am Chicana to this day, reflecting a movement to embrace our indigenous
ancestry.
Now, about to enter my sixth decade, identity is elusive.
Dedicated to growing corn, solidarity with Indigenous peoples, and welcomed
as a Chicana,
I want to be in a space of respect, love, and community.
Overcoming centuries of colonization requires healing and truth.
In every generation, some have sought healing, some families have
intermarried.
But divisions remain.
Adding to centuries of prayers,
a Chicana prayer imagines the words that could have brought us healing long
ago and may still.

Our Indigenous ancestors may have said,
“The suffering of our people is beyond your understanding.
Our Pueblos united in revolt to remove you from these lands.
You brought slavery and forced labor.
You prohibited our spirituality and our sacred rituals.
You settled on our ancestral lands.
Your presence created hardship and scarcity for our people.
We ask that you respect our sacred lands and waters.
That you center your presence acknowledging our sacred lands.
We ask that violence not be glorified, which opens painful memories of
suffering.
We ask that history be told from an Indigenous perspective.
We welcome you to our feast days and to learn about our ways.
Some of us are relatives as our people became your ancestors as well.
We want to heal from this past.
We invite you to a dialogue to create a better path forward.”

Our Spanish, Mexican, mestizo ancestors may have said,
“We are sorry for the violence of the ones who came before us
For stealing your corn and your children
For taking your lands for our own
We respect your sovereignty and spiritual ways.
We respect your lands and waters and your centuries of caregiving.
We wish to learn from you about how to live in a good way in this beautiful place.
We are grateful for what we have learned from you and what you have shared,
Seeds of sacred corn, beans, squash, chile that have nourished us for centuries,
Invitations to your feast days, and generations of grace, kindness, and
generosity.

Those who came before us as colonizers were hurtful and abusive.

We are descended from the colonizer and the oppressed.

We are still learning our own history.

We resolve to not be oppressors.

We have fallen in love with this place, your sacred lands.

We know of no other home.

We wish to stay.”

We sing to the dawn

The day is coming

We give thanks.

Note

¹ August 10, 2020 marked the 340th anniversary of the Pueblo Indian Revolt of 1680. The day is celebrated annually in New Mexico as a day of Pueblo Indian solidarity and resistance in the face of Spanish colonialism.

