

QUEERING HERBALISM

3rd Edition



Brown. Queer. Herbalism.

Why Hello, Hello!

I'm Toi, a community organizer for food, health and economic justice. I'm also an activist, a visionary medicine maker of many varieties. My commitment to being an organizer and activist for social justice for my communities and my on-going passion for and ancestral ties to healing work has led me to pursue a path as a medicine maker. As many may know, there aren't many (visible) herbalists of color in the U.S.- especially in Austin, TX where I lived for many years. Western medicine and pharmaceuticals today are also not always affordable and can be inaccessible and toxic. I'd like to be part of an alternative to our inefficient American medical system.

I started the Queer Herbalism blog, Herbal Freedom School page and Freedom Session Zines because I get really bored not having much cultural context in the carefully crafted "herbal revolution." C'mon- people of color are responsible for a lot of the botanical knowledge we have today and not many "modern western" herbalists are really saying this. Not many folks who are writing these popular books on "modern western herbalism" are committed to trying to know more about the true (her/hir)story.

I'm interested in knowing more about the healing work of our (**brown**) ancestors and rediscovering, restoring and reclaiming their healing legacy. While it's great to learn about "modern western herbalism"- the very eurocentric view is not really my cup o' tea. *pun intended. I am interested in the work of curander@s, sangomas, inyangas, medicine people, and other indigenous healers who work with plants and herbs toward spiritual/emotional/physical/ and mental health.

As a queer-identified, gender non-conforming medicine maker who works with plants, I am also interested in the ways that two-spirited and gender variant healers have been involved in the healing of their communities throughout generations. It is said that in the past, queer and transgender folks were often healers in their societies. In past research I've found that two-spirit,

gender non-conforming people have a long past as healers. (Leslie Feinberg's [Transgender Warriors](#) is a good resource.) Being between genders- neither male or female, or maybe being both, was thought to be a gift in the past, and still is considered sacred in some societies today.

In many "shamanic" traditions, there was the idea that combining the characteristics of all sexes and all genders (I recognize that there are more than 2 sexes or genders) could connect one to a transcendent spiritual realm. Two-spirit folks were messengers of the Creator, visionaries, dream interpreters, keepers and teachers of spiritual principles, and medicine people. They were called on to do burials, bless unions and births and perform other ceremonies. Because they embodied both Mother Earth and Father Sky and held masculine and feminine hearts within their souls (two spirits), they were perceived as having twice the power.

They were thought to be more able to be fair and to be able to see into the hearts of males and females (and I'd venture to say all genders). Since they inhabited the masculine and feminine in one body they were thought to be able to "see" with the eyes of men and women (and I want to say all genders). This made them mediators and bridges. They were also seen as mediators between two worlds- that of Spirit and the human world, as well as between partners, tribe, and nations. In older world religions, the deities in-between genders were viewed as whole-gendered and therefore balanced.

As I do this work I am honoring my ancestors and my predecessors. I will document my journey in zines and other liberatory literature and on the website as I research and practice the oldways and come into my path of healing work.

Here is the vision I am co-creating:

I'm using the herbal knowledge gained through the years, beginning with years healing my own self, then with my community herbalist program and years of study and practice afterward to assist with much needed healing work in my communities far under-served by "modern medicine" because of

race, gender, sexuality, ability and/or economic oppression. I will build with other holistic healers and medicine makers- herbalists, acupuncturists, massage therapists, yoga and movement instructors, art activists and other spiritual healers to assist in healing work for communities of color, queer, two-spirit, trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming communities, and low-income communities on all levels- physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I will not only assist with healing work, but will also pass on knowledge through knowledge shares and freedom schooling so that this wisdom is reclaimed and made accessible to the People.

I'm looking forward to traveling with you on this journey. Stop by to see updates on the website from time to time.

Healing and Justice,

Toi

About Queering Herbalism

Queering herbalism is a compilation of articles about our ancestors, our legacy and our on-going resistance to colonization and the forced severance between the land, our People, plant medicine and healing knowledge.

This is a resource that serves both as a remembrance and reclamation of our heritage as healers, shamans, curander@s, medicine-makers of all kinds- for the mind, body AND spirit.

For hundreds of years our connection to our healing traditions and healing Spirit has been suppressed and those of us who are black, brown, red, yellow, women*, and gender variant have been persecuted and made to doubt our innate healing abilities. We've been made to question a rich heritage passed down from our elders since the beginning of time.

I hope that you will find your own story and your place within past and current healing traditions while reading these articles. May you feel empowered to reclaim those suppressed, stolen, and hidden pieces of you so that you can continue on your own healing journey and be Whole.

When inspired, please support and learn more about the brilliant healers and authors of the following articles and essays who have spent much time researching and bringing this information to us.

Yours in healing, harmony and the reclamation of heritage,

-AGQ

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REFLECTIONS AND RECLAMATION

The Inaccessibility of Modern Western Herbalism

This is just a quick note after stumbling upon the mention of a new "free herbalism" lecture that will be available in the fall in the Midwest. It got me thinking about how the herbalism created by many ancestors of color was free and how far we've moved from that. Healing is something you've got to pay for now. So many people are clamoring to go to Traditional Chinese Medicine, Ayurveda, and herbalism programs so they can charge money. So many mainstream healers have gone to other countries to gather ancient knowledge only to come market it back to the descendants of the creators of that knowledge at a premium price. I know that people have to sustain themselves...but seriously? How are these (often new age) healers any different than western medicine practitioners?

Capitalism traps us all.

It does not truly allow for the "altruism"...no...compassion necessary for true and effective healing. If we are so worried about paying bills and making ends meet that we turn down a person who is suffering from illness...can we call ourselves true healers? We know how this exchange has gone awry and we see it daily in our broken (no decimated!) health care system. And we especially see how it affects low income folks of color who can no longer afford wellness and don't always have access to prevention (especially if living in toxic towns, food deserts, and/or living high stress, low quality of life situations working 2 and 3 jobs).

When I see the marketing of ancient healing knowledge and the inflated sale of this knowledge, I am *more than disappointed. I am especially disappointed in the way that some people market themselves as radical but are the first to try to charge a sick person living in poverty based on "principle" (the principle that everyone should pay).

I am disappointed that there aren't more holistic healing programs allowing for scholarships for low income people of color

to learn what has been lost to us so that we can, in turn, take it back to our community to heal. It costs thousands of dollars for these programs- and by all means, if people have it they should pay it. I think we all know what demographic can usually make that type of "monetary sacrifice," though. We see this clearly in the number of white holistic healers to holistic healers of color. It becomes more and more apparent that some of these folks would rather keep this knowledge and sell it to low income communities and not necessarily pass it on or have it propagated.

Hmm...Healers as gatekeepers...

I feel that after the hippies began to appropriate other cultures and their healing modalities in the 60s that much of this knowledge became inaccessible (and unaffordable) as decades passed. Of course, there were also people who came to the US to market these healing modalities, as well. (And many times at a premium price- why not get these affluent westerners to come out of pocket?)

But herbalism...something so rooted in indigenous culture. How is it now more and more expensive to attain this knowledge? How is it becoming less and less accessible to folks of color who need it the most? Not to mention communities like the queer community who also don't have access to western medicine and would benefit from traditional forms of healing--it's just too expensive many times. I appreciate sliding scale, but when are we going to address the fact that we need more people from marginalized communities healing in those same communities. Which means- we need those who have been marginalized to be able to get this information/education.

That is all-
for now.

No Herbal Revolution without an Anti- Oppression Framework

It's true, folks. No matter how radical we may think that holistic healing work is, it's not revolutionary if we continue to oppress others (especially those we are providing healing work to) during this movement. Unless we are earnest with ourselves about power dynamics, our privilege (this could be race, gender, ability, etc.), and our biases, we trap ourselves in in the very patterns that persist in the broken health care system and we severely limit our healing abilities.

What is Anti-oppression?

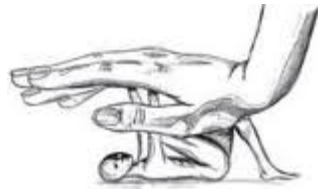


It's anti-racism, anti-homophobia or anti-heterosexism, anti-sexism, anti-classism, anti-ableism, etc. Basically- it's "anti-bigotry" in all it's forms. Anti-oppressive practice has developed within social work (though its roots are much older and tied to feminist, queer, and black liberation and anti-racist movements). At first glance, you'll wonder why I'm talking about social work but bear with me. The social work profession's mission is to 'oppose the roots and effects of social oppression'. This doesn't sound too much up our alley. Hang on. According to the International Federation of Social Workers, their mission is 'the liberation of people to enhance well-being'. Well, that sounds kind of familiar.

The story goes that a group of social work researchers developed anti-oppressive social work due to oppressive practices and power imbalances between the social worker, client, agency,

and the state. This new model for anti-oppressive social work was created in order to 'decontaminate social work from expressions of oppression and bias.' Some in the profession began to move away from 'cultural sensitivity' and toward a more 'active and critical anti-racist and anti-discriminatory perspective' when dealing with cultural diversity.

Why am I even talking about all this? That power imbalance exists between herbalists and those who come to them to be healed/ to co-heal. As healers who are very much human, we bring in our assumptions and biases. We can't leave them at the door. They are very much present in our consultations and inform our healing work. We encounter all types of people who have had all types of experiences. If we are going to work with them on a physical, emotional, spiritual and energetic level, it's important that we don't allow our biases to harm this vulnerable person who has come to us for healing or prevention.



According to "Revel and Riot" anti-oppression involves recognizing and deconstructing the systemic, institutional and personal forms of disempowerment used by certain groups over others. By examining things like social structures, group dynamics and patterns of oppression (like racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, etc) we can begin to work towards equalizing the power imbalance in our communities. Through this, we bring each other strength by recognizing the interconnectedness of our struggles while deepening our understanding of our own roles, power and privilege in society, as well as the varied and valuable experiences of others. More on this at revelandriot.com/resources/anti-oppression.

What does an anti-oppressive framework look like for holistic healers?

1. It's acknowledging systemic barriers to health and those communities that are disproportionately affected by them.
2. It's continuously checking your privilege and biases and making sure it doesn't inform your treatment of co-healers/clients/patients/customers.
3. It's making an effort to understand histories of oppression and acknowledging and accepting cultural differences because denial of these histories and color-blindness are **microaggressions** and sure signs of privilege. Folks of color rarely have the luxury of waking up and having a day to navigate where they don't have to know what color they are. Many visibly queer folks don't have this privilege either.

There is a lot of discrimination going on in the health care system based on race, gender, sexuality, immigration status, etc. and it'd be terrific if folks could go in to get holistic health care and not have to worry about racism, sexism, or homophobia/transphobia. I've seen that in holistic care the same issues ring true as with "liberal" and "progressive" cities/communities. People believe that these problems just don't exist. People believe they are far too enlightened and therefore don't need to check their biases or privileges. They've already done the work and aren't capable of discrimination.

This is just as dangerous as overt racism, homophobia, or xenophobia, if not more dangerous.



A portrait

Let me give you a few examples of how all this plays out in holistic health care...

- The power dynamic is off and clients/co-healers of color or queer clients/co-healers are infantilized or the healer takes on a paternalistic role.
- Consultations with healers may feel unsafe because of paternalism or assumptions based on racism/homophobia/sexism/ableism, etc.
- Healers reach out to a certain demographic over another because of racial biases and assumptions. Perhaps they think that a certain community isn't interested in being healthy or in holistic health because of these assumptions.
- Failure to work with folks who are low income because they "won't" follow a treatment plan or can't show up on time (usually this is due to them working multiple jobs and trying to support a family)

Making the Effort, Committing to Change



Basically, it's up to you to make the effort to examine the ways in which you contribute to the perpetuation of all these "-isms". Do you really want to bring biases and phobias into your healing work? There's no way to be neutral and, despite what many may think, being a healer does not make you immune to socialized bigotry. If you are committed to creating a healthier world, why bring such toxicity into your practice? In healing from these socialized behaviors and your own internalized oppression you are becoming more whole and, in doing that, becoming a much better healer.

There's much more to say but I'll leave you with these resources. Please also remember, in your quest for knowledge of anti-oppression, that it is your own duty to educate yourself. It is not the duty of marginalized communities to teach you. I've written about this [here](#). Please also remember that there is no 'mastering' this work. It is on-going, difficult, and often goes unrewarded from others. But what a gift it is to be conscious, Whole, and not perpetuate cycles of injustice and to join the Revolution!

Check out anti-oppression resources at:

<http://queerherbalism.blogspot.com/2013/03/no-herbal-revolution-without-anti.html>

We are the Sum of our Ancestors, Decolonizing Herbalism and other healing modalities

“Lo que se hereda no se hurta/ What you inherit you don’t/didn’t steal.”

This dicho is a lesson for all of us Q/POC struggling with identity and our “place” in this assimilationist nation of neo-colonizers and appropriators. That which is already ours by nature, that which is our inheritance...we can’t be accused of stealing or steal. We don’t have to. No, it’s not even about “taking it back” or ‘occupying’ or ‘getting back to x, y, z’. It’s already ours. Been ours. Y nipodemos vender. (We can’t sell it) Y nadie nos puede robar de nuestra herencia. (No one can rob us of our heritage/inheritance).

Angela Lugo (a Puerto Rican yerbera/ herbalist) says in ‘Testimonial for the ancestors’: “We are the sum of our ancestors.”

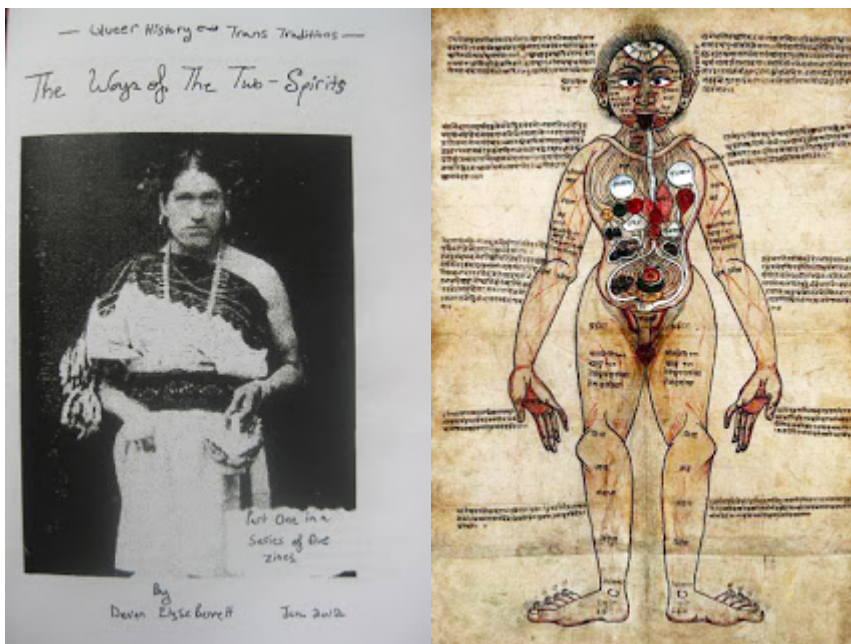
The knowledge of our ancestors, our inheritance, can never be taken away from us. Though others may try to eradicate it or even borrow it and sell back a flawed and incomplete version, we carry in our Spirit all the knowledge amassed over thousands of years by our ancestors.

Relearning/rediscovering can seem like an uphill battle when systems are set against us reclaiming our legacies, but it can and is being done. So don’t be disheartened. It will take some time to rediscover what took centuries upon centuries and generations upon generations for the colonizers to try to eliminate, assimilate or destroy. Rest be assured that it IS happening and at a faster rate than the actual destruction.



By Carmen Lomas Garza

Our queer and POC ancestors have a rich history of being healers. **Fact.** We had our own systems of healings, our own modalities and our own ways of passing down this knowledge. While some western herbalists will try to tell you that this knowledge no longer exists and has been decimated or only exists in fragments, this is **not** completely the Truth.



See, here is the issue:

Many mainstream holistic healers start out with these assumptions. As with many other types of “outsider” work intending to create social change in marginalized communities, there’s this assumption that these outsiders are going in and blazing this new trail because it either

a) doesn’t exist and the communities need to be taught

or

b) past knowledge or peoples have been romanticized and given a “shout out” but their ways are thought to be either stripped down and incomplete or assumed to be no longer relevant in “our society.”

Why is this?

The “dominant culture” finds the old ways illegitimate because it’s not written (our People have largely oral traditions and this is not valued) and these ways also don’t look familiar. I’ve seen some western herbalists go in expecting healing systems to look a certain way and if they don’t, they are delegitimized and deemed incomplete.

I’ve seen spirituality stripped away when it is integral to our ancestors’ healing. I’ve seen herbalists assume that “herbalists” don’t exist in certain indigenous communities because they don’t go by “herbalist” or “shaman” or words (even certain concepts) that were invented by mainstream (white) herbalists and anthropologists.

I’ve seen herbalists decipher between “practitioners” and just regular old folks who are, you know, “just fiddling around with herbs in their kitchens to heal their families”. But there’s no difference in our communities. The fact that someone doesn’t mass produce herbs or do consultations for pay on a large scale or go around touting their herbal skills from coast to coast does not discredit them. The fact that

black and brown herbalists don't flock to societies, groups, or networks of healers and herbalists using titles they don't use themselves (see "shaman" and "herbalist"), doesn't mean that they don't exist.

The fact that you will not find our ancestor's knowledge in books written by them does not discredit their knowledge. The written word is a western value. Folks—not just any folks, the very folks who find themselves with privilege and power on a regular basis.

yes, white folks...

have to stop expecting things to look the way they're used to. That's why there's so much misinformation. Do you really trust a codex or an herbal written by the colonizers who committed genocide? Do you really trust their understanding? Seems like they'd be bad historians.

... but maybe that's just me.

What gives anyone the right to deem what is legitimate or not based on their own levels of comfort, methods, and value systems? What gives anyone the right to call a system mere superstition versus a legitimate healing modality? Why does a group of people with power and privilege get to tell other groups of people that their systems are not up to par or that they're incomplete and better luck next lifetime or when they've "fixed it"?

The "western lens" is truly a blindfold a lot of times. Sometimes you just can't compare things. You can't look for commonalities in problematic assimilationist ways, legitimizing whatever looks similar to your teachings and what you've learned and discounting all other parts of a system.

Don't assume that all systems from India (ayurveda, yoga, etc.) are the most advanced because the British said so. Don't assume Acupuncture was only done in China. Don't

assume Greek medicine and Hippocrates are superior because that's where most timelines start for "western herbalism". African and First Nations medicine gets overlooked a lot because some don't consider it to have much value. Why are their ways considered more "superstitious" or "primitive"? Maybe their value can't be assessed because it's less accessible to outsiders? Who knows.

All I know is that-



By Ernesto Yerena

We are the sum of our ancestors.

We are their medicine stories and folk remedies. We are their nourishing and medicinal recipes. We are their dances for the Divine. We are the legacy of their healing circles and nurtured crops. And as long as all this lays forgotten because we are learning the "dominant" history as if our ancestors' did not exist or is not as valuable...we will be incomplete. A fraction of what we could be.

It's time to decolonize holistic health

Here are some relevant *dichos* to begin the process:

Lo que viene facil, facil se va



(minus the todo los hombres son iguales! smh...)

Lo barato sale caro



So this needs to be said-

This isn't just the work of people of color as this erasure wasn't completely of our doing, either.

Where do we even start?

- Classes and conferences need to have diversified curriculum, workshops and panels.
- Question "authenticity" and "legitimacy" and why it is that certain systems are thought to be more so than others.
- Question why certain voices are not present in the oodles of books available and why certain people are permitted to speak for others authoritatively.

Don't folks get tired of hearing only about their own perspective or the same old models? We should all challenge ourselves in this if we consider ourselves to be healers. Ancestral healing is central to our own healing. At the core of this healing is knowing our histories which can be extremely difficult but not impossible.

My healing story...journal entries

In this entry I divulge more about my healing journey, as I've promised to do in the past, so folks can understand more about why holistic healing, writing, and the existence of the queerherbalism.blogspot.com website are important to me.

Wednesday (5/8/13) confession:

I cried on the acupuncture table today. Not because of sorrow or pain...but because I knew that this was the beginning of being healed...cured...when the past 5 years have been full of so many doctors and specialists telling me that I couldn't be. And a few have told me I was dying or would die.

Today I sat down with my co-healer...a black gay traditional chinese medicine (TCM) student and his supervisor Will Morris (of world reknown) came in to evaluate me...he told me right off that he has done research specifically on lupus patients ...over 500. That he's treated/healed many and went on to tell me the treatment plan. And let me tell you why that brought me to tears on the table...rheumatologists, general practitioners, hematologists...none of them know what the hell they are doing when it comes to lupus patients. We are lab rats and guinea pigs...and the majority of us are female-bodied and of color. They give you toxic drugs that suppress your body's natural processes and cause cancer, diabetes, and death in the long run. You sacrifice your whole life for a few decades of diminished pain.

And today, this very man told me in not so many words...that he knows exactly what he's doing. And on top of that, I realize that I am being healed with herbs from the earth after 3 years on god knows what synthetic crap they've pumped into my body ...5 years of non-stop pain.

So I cried tears of joy on that table and my eyes well up even now...thinking about the way my ancestors and Spirit have led me to a wonderful roommate who happens to go to a TCM

school...which happens to have a black gay student who happens to be interested in a lot of other healing modalities...who happens to occasionally be supervised by a world-renowned TCM teacher who happens to have dealt specifically with the disease I knew I was on the path to die of...like so many sisters.

I shed tears for the unnecessary deaths of so many from this disease that doesn't have to be fatal. This must be...has to be... my initiation...onto the Path. My path as a healer. So that is why I live my life the way that I live it - for those who have tried to understand. I don't have much time to spare...and I live this life knowing that it is a gift that was almost taken from me.



Thursday (5/23/13) confession:

I woke up today thinking it was a new day...but much like any other beginning of a new day. I ate...made my tea...chatted with my housemate and then got this urge to go for a run. At first I didn't listen to my intuition...but then...I thought about how my body was feeling that was allowing me to have this urge. It was practically pain free. I quickly threw on my basketball shorts and undershirt and running shoes, stretched, and went for a run. A run in humid weather...with no pain. I felt this release...and I'll tell you why. I was a damn good mid-distance runner and jumper in high school. I won district and made it to regionals in several

events. Some friends, after college, used to joke around and call me "track star". But ...that was then.

When this illness (systemic lupus) started to take over my body 5 or so years ago, I slowly lost my ability to do two things that I loved that gave me release: dancing and running. When I saw people on the track or on the road running I'd be overwhelmed with depression for hours or even days because my body used to be healthy. It used to do what I wanted it to do. I used to not feel pain all the time. I used to not have palpitations with the slightest bit of exertion. I used to not have this ongoing angry conversation happening between my muscles and joints and cold and wet weather. I didn't used to have constant fatigue on really bad days.

Pain is so tiring. So, so tiring. And people's comments that I "looked" fine would really weigh on my spirit. Doctor's comments that the pain was only growing pains were so heavy. Was I imagining all this? Was I a hypochondriac? No, I decided...and that was the beginning of my healing journey. After dealing with dismissal of healthcare practitioners, there were still folks who were close to me that were in denial. Though I have been diagnosed 6 times with systemic lupus, it has taken almost 3 years for my mother to acknowledge that I "might" have it and this has been super harmful for me.

I remember the exact month and year I hit rock bottom- December 2010 (NY). I was stressed out with finals in grad school and I was starting to not be able to walk. My best friend insisted that I finally go to the doctor. It wasn't like I hadn't gone to a bajillion in Austin, TX. In 2009 I had a hematologist/oncologist, a cardiologist, and I don't even remember the names of the other specialists. I was tired of giving all my blood to be told ridiculous things like, for instance, that I might have cancer!! Or they'd give me iron and I'd have to deal with excruciating pain and the doctors wouldn't listen to me when I'd tell them that something was wrong with the dosage. Later I found out that I had thalassemia...which is a disease that folks from the "Mediterranean region", South Asia, and descendants of people from Latin America usually inherit. But, since the doctors thought I'm "just black" and never bothered to

ask of my heritage, all they'd test me for was...guess...that's right! Sickle cell anemia, syphilis, HIV/AIDS...!

The school nurse actually listened to me and ran a ton of tests and referred me out to brown doctors who gave me the diagnosis of systemic lupus and thalassemia. If I'd waited around for racist and oblivious doctors in Austin to diagnose me I probably wouldn't have figured any of that out until I was close to kidney failure...like so many others of my sisters (and some brothers).

I was bed ridden A LOT in the winter and the beginning of the spring of 2011. I had a homeopath and an herbalist that worked in tandem to co-heal me emotionally, spiritually and physically and some of those days were the best I've ever felt. But those days would be interspersed with days where my body felt like a cage. I'd wake up wondering if I would be able to move that day. Every morning was a surprise. That's when I began my philosophactivist blog.

Writing has always been a release for me and since I couldn't dance or run as much as I wanted to anymore, I began to write...and write...and write about my own pain. And then I got sick of writing about my pain and the origin of my pain and started to write about the quintessential origin of my community's pain which is psychological, spiritual, emotional, and physical: Oppression.

But...I also realized that my activist work in NY was oppressing me emotionally and physically because I was burning out and not taking care of myself, even though I was really sick. And those NYC subways are no joke...they are not limited-ability or disability friendly! People would shove me to the side and grumble when I was having bad days and could barely walk. I was moving too slow for them, of course.

I remember my 76 year old rheumatologist telling me that I had to stop my "civic duties" and that it was too much for my body. I remember looking him in his eye and saying that it was basically the only thing that made me feel better. It was the only thing that made me forget the pain. I might have even said that it was

all I had to live for at that point. Ohhhh sweet delusion! My body put an end to that. I could barely go to class let alone go organize.

For more on my experiences with western medicine and healing see my blog entry "Discovering our ability to Heal Ourselves after Invisibility, Voicelessness or Confrontation with the Medical Establishment (and in our Lives, in general)"

<http://philosophactivist.blogspot.com/2011/04/discovering-our-ability-to-heal.html>

All this, folks, to give background on why today is so spectacular. After going to acupuncture yesterday and getting a new formula, I feel like running again. I thank the ancestors for bringing such knowledgeable traditional Chinese medicine practitioners in my life after years and years of ignorant, racist, sexist, transphobic/homophobic specialists and practitioners. I get emotional every time I think of how blessed I am to still be here breathing after constant silencing, brushes with death, numerous hospital visits, and inner turmoil. I would say I shouldn't be here...but that's a boldfaced lie. I should. And so should all the beautiful brown womyn who have passed on from this world from this illness unjustly.

Today I ran for me...for them...for my ancestors...for people I haven't met yet or possibly will never meet. I ran with presence. Insight. I did walking meditation in between some sprints. I appreciated this morning for all it revealed to me.

In my blog entry Oppression and Austin: Drag Performance, Racism, Misogyny and Transphobia was part of the release.

(<http://philosophactivist.blogspot.com/2013/05/oppression-and-austin-drag-performance.html>)

I know it was. It had to be. It's not a coincidence. I let go of something deep when I put that out there. Those weren't just my words...they were an amalgamation of a number of the conversations had within my community and I just put it out there. I'm here in this life as "the messenger", "the bridge", and

even "the crossroads" (as one of my close friends and I talk about). I spent my childhood and part of my adolescence holding back pain...holding back my Truth...and as I've gained Voice and more autonomy in this world full of policing and sheeple I know that I can never close my eyes, turn my head, or shut my mouth again.

So, I encourage you to find what it is that brings you joy and release and do it...often! Surround yourself with people who lift you up and that you trust and who don't add toxicity when you are trying to heal. Take care of yourself aaaaand each other (ok, ok I'm just messin' with ya'll...that's Jerry Springer).

Thank you for reading!



The flower above is the honeysuckle. I had the urge to make honeysuckle essence. Well, have for some time. But today it became abundantly clear that it was time. The honeysuckle allows you to "live in the present rather than the past. They say that "it's usually for folks who are unable and unwilling to accept the changes of [his/her/hir] present life, and who expect nothing

good to come from the future". Bach remedies also say it's good for "those who have lost a partner, but refuse to part with their belongings or move on to another relationship, even after years have passed. And for those whom the past was better than the present and want desperately to hang on to it. Those who cannot learn from the experiences of the past nor can they integrate those experiences into the present. And those who have regrets about the past and cannot let them go and who replay their missed opportunities and mistakes."

For me, it represents inner joy and peace, courage, strength and connection with our highest self. (Which all comes with releasing the past). Sweet release. It also represents healing together as a community, for me ...as it always grows with hundreds of other blossoms. And I understand that old folklore says it attracts wealth. Today a bee and I slightly battled over its blossoms. I took only a few and left him the bounty.

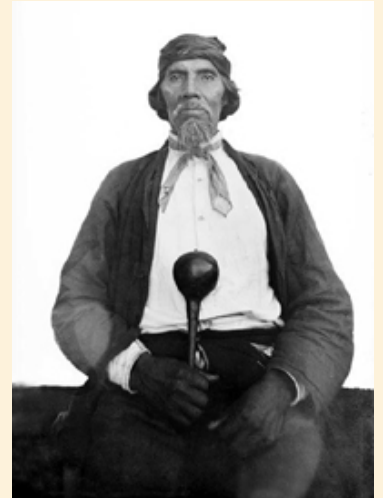
TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS HEALING

Medicine According to Cherokee Legend

From: <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/na-cherokeemedicine.html>

The Old Ones say that at one time all of Creation spoke the same language. The plants could communicate with the finned ones, the four-leggeds could speak with the trees, the stones could talk with the wind, and even the most dependent, most pitiful part of creation, the two-leggeds, or as we have come to call ourselves, the humans, could also speak with the other parts of creation. All existed in harmony. The plants, the animals, and the elements of the Four Directions (all existence) all knew that if the two-leggeds were to survive, they would need help.

The animals gave of themselves, willingly sacrificing, so that the humans could have food. They knew that their skins were much better suited to survival than that of the humans, so they allowed their skins to be taken and used for clothing and shelter. The Finned ones, The Fliers, and the Crawlers also allowed themselves to be used by the humans, to insure their survival.



[Cherokee Medicine Man](#) A'yun'ini, also known as Swimmer.

The Plant people, the Standing people (trees), and the Stone People (rocks) freely gave of themselves so that the humans had what they needed for food, clothing, and shelter. An agreement was forged that the two-leggeds would ask permission for these gifts, give thanks for the sacrifice, and take no more than they needed. And so, it was good.

But then, the two-leggeds started growing in numbers, and began to feel themselves more important than the rest of creation. They began to believe that the Web of Life revolved around them, ignoring the fact that they were just one small part of the Circle. The two-leggeds began to kill without asking for permission. They began to take more than they needed. They ceased to give thanks. All parts of the agreement were broken.

The great Animal Councils banded together to determine what they should do to right these wrongs. They needed to protect themselves from destruction and eradication. And so, it was decreed by the council, if one of their clan was killed by the two-leggeds and thanks was not given for the sacrifice, the Chief Animal Spirit would afflict the disrespectful killer with a devastating disease.

The plants were distressed and said to the animals, "They wrong us, too. They dig us up, trample us, burn us out, and don't even listen when we try to tell them what we can do to help them. Yet, we feel compassion for the two-leggeds. Man struggles to realize his place in the web of creation and he cannot learn if he is wiped out by disease. Man needs our help, so for every disease you animals bring to them, we, the Plant People will give them a cure. All the two-leggeds have to do is 'listen' when we talk to them."



The Circle of Medicine

- 2000 BC** Here eat this root.
- 1000 AD** That root is heathen. Here, say this prayer.
- 1500 AD** That prayer is superstition. Here, drink this potion.
- 1940 AD** That potion is snake oil. Here, swallow this pill.
- 1985 AD** That pill is ineffective. Here, take this antibiotic.
- 2007 AD** That antibiotic doesn't work anymore. Here, eat this root!

The above courtesy [Nuwati Herbals](#), June, 2011.

Cherokee Medicine

Like numerous other Native American tribes, the knowledge of [Cherokee](#) medicine was handed down from generation to generation to the "chosen" [healers](#). Traditional [Cherokee](#) members consulted their medicine people for not only medical problems, but also dilemmas in their lives, and emotional problems. Like other Native American tribes, their most frequently used remedies were for common colds, aches and pains.

Some common herbs used by the [Cherokee](#) as well as other Native American tribes was boneset tea, as a remedy for colds, while wild cherry bark was used for coughs, sore throat, and diarrhea. To ease the pain during childbirth and speed the delivery process, Blue Cohosh root, was used in a tea. Using Wild Carrot Blossoms and Devil's Club could offset the ill effects of Diabetes. Fevers were soothed with teas made from Dogwood, Feverwort, and Willow bark. A still famously enjoyed Pennyroyal tea was thought to cure headaches, and they used Native Hemlock to help with the flu.

Some serious surgeries that required sedatives would usually be prepared with Wild Lettuce, Hops, and Wild Black Cherry. Heart and circulatory problems were addressed using Green Hellebore, American Hemp, and Dogbane. Many of these Native American remedies were the basis for the modern medicines that are commonly used today such as penicillin.

**** Note:** The information above is courtesy of the [Cherokee Nation Cultural Resource Center](#) who cautions that it must be remembered that these plants are very valuable as medicines because of the great chemical powers they contain. At the same time, these chemicals can be potentially dangerous if used in the wrong way. [Cherokee](#) herbalists have great experience, and have gone through extensive training and observation.

Indigenous Medicine and Environmental Justice - Part 1



Curandera de la Madre Tierra by [Ricardo Ortega](#)

Curanderismo's resurgence

**LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE AND ANCIENT
WISDOM ARE BEHIND REVIVAL**

By Devon G. Peña

First in an occasional series

(SEATTLE, WA) The traditional practice of *curanderismo*, or indigenous medicine, involves the holistic integration of homeopathic and naturopathic methods and herbal remedies. This means that *curanderismo* builds a bridge between physical and spiritual qualities and conditions of the human organism; it connects the biomedical with the sociocultural dimensions of wellness.

In recent decades, traditional folk healing or *curanderismo* has gained increasing status as a legitimate part of interdisciplinary and multicultural approaches to the medical arts and sciences. Thus, even the [American Cancer Society](#), hardly a bastion of alternative medicine, offers this commentary:

Curanderismo is a form of folk healing that includes various techniques such as prayer, herbal medicine, healing rituals, spiritualism, massage, and psychic healing. It is a system of traditional beliefs that are common in Hispanic-American communities, particularly in the southwestern United States...Available scientific evidence...reports that curanderismo helps to improve symptoms, reduce pain, and relieve stress...While some aspects of curanderismo, such as using folk remedies for minor illness, are practiced at home, many people seek out specially trained folk healers called curanderos (male healers) or curanderas (female healers). Curanderos' knowledge of healing may be passed down from close relatives or learned through apprenticeships with experienced healers. In some cases, their healing powers may be described as a divine gift received later in life. Most curanderos say that their ability to heal involves divine energy being channeled through their bodies. In addition...there are yerberos (herbalists), parteras (midwives), and sobadors or sobadoras (who use massage, bone manipulation, acupuncture, etc.), each of whom treat more specific or limited problems. All of these healers may use herbs in addition to their other treatment methods. Most of these healers do not charge for their services, but they may accept donations.

There are numerous stereotypes about *curanderismo* and many are associated with stigma; e.g., only poor and ignorant people will use a *curandera/o*. So it is encouraging to see organizations like the

American Cancer Society acknowledge, albeit with some caveats, the importance and value of indigenous medicine.

But this is only half of the story. While curanderismo is enjoying a strong resurgence today and is making serious in-roads into health care systems in clinics, community health centers, and hospitals, it is also still marginalized and many physicians and health care administrators still frown or dismiss this ancient system of biomedical and spiritual healing arts.

The survival and contemporary resurgence of curanderismo is tied to the environmental and food justice struggles of Mesoamerican Diaspora and Mexican American communities in the United States and Canada.

Toward a Deeper History of Indigenous Medicine

(This section is partly based on a section of Chapter 3 of my book, Mexican Americans and the Environment: Tierra y vida. Tucson: U. of Arizona Press, 2005)

The roots of indigenous medicine are deep and this is certainly true of curanderismo. In pre-contact Mexico, the institution of curanderismo was at the center of the medical and spiritual healing arts of the Culhua Mexica (a.k.a. Azteca) in the twin island cities of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco. The Mexica had a highly advanced ethnobotany and this was in large measure a significant empirical basis for the healing arts of their indigenous medicine.

Traditional healers and physicians (Nahuatl *ticitl*,

Spanish *curandera/os* and *médica/os*) were familiar with thousands of wild and domesticated plants used in medicinal practice. Mexica *remedios* –natural herbal remedies administered via teas, pastes, tinctures, suppositories, and other forms – are still widely used today.

The ethnobotany of the Mexica was not limited to herbal remedies; the formal study and classification of cultivated food crops and their nutritional and health-affirming properties were also important. Experimentation with crop selection and intercropping resulted in the spread of practices such as the use of companion plants, e.g., the planting of beans and other legumes for their nitrogen-fixing properties. Keeping the body of the person and the health of the Earth (soil) were integrated aspects of the same philosophy of resilience and respect for original instructions.



A steam bath (Temazcalli) depicted in [Codice Nuttall](#)

The Mexica metropolis had a visible and esteemed cadre of women healers and midwives (Nahuatl *tetlacuicuilique*) and midwifery was a central profession of Tenocha women. These caregivers provided Mexica women of all classes access to prenatal, birthing, and postnatal care.

Tenocha healers and *parteras* (midwives) may have had their own *calmecac* a royally sanctioned, semi-religious institution of higher learning and research to educate and train new practitioners. Midwives also had their own patroness, the goddess [sic] of fertility and health, Teteoinnan who is also known as Temazcalteci, “the grandmother of the steam bath.”

During childbirth, midwives took control of the household and used the home’s *temazcalli* (steam bath) to comfort the mother and encourage a soothing labor, safe delivery, and comfortable postpartum recovery. The institution of midwifery may have prolonged the longevity of infants and reduced the incidence of miscarriage and postpartum morbidity among women and newborns.

Contemporary resurgence of red/brown medicine

These traditional practices have survived and are indeed becoming part of a widespread revival of indigenous medicine in Mexico and across the United States and Canada.

One common practice which illustrates the holistic nature of indigenous medicine, combining the biophysical and mental/spiritual aspects is *la limpieza* or the spiritual cleansing bath. A respected contemporary practitioner, [Maestra Grace Alvarez Sesma](#), describes this practice in detail:

SPIRITUAL CLEANSING BATH: This herbal bath is for cleansing one’s body/mind/spirit of inner and outer negativity or stagnant energy. It can be taken during the Full Moon or the waning phase of Grandmother Moon. Your intention, prayers and the consecration of your space in honor of the Guardians of Light, Love, Healing, Wisdom, and Protection transforms

your home and bathing area into sacred space...A very important aspect of all ceremonial work...Gather or purchase your supplies ahead of time. You can take this bath either on three consecutive nights OR the day/night before the full moon, OR the day/night of the full moon, OR the day/night after the full moon. It may also be taken during the waning phase of Grandmother Moon. Prepare for your purification bath by showering early so that your body is clean before taking this spiritual bath...

*1. Smudge yourself with copal smoke or sage, cedar or sweetgrass then set your intention for your clearing bath: what is it that you wish to release? For example, the root cause of illness, anxiety, fear, chronic negative self-talk/thinking, Envidias (jealousies) directed to you OR that *you* feel towards another, obstacles to harmonious relationships in your personal and professional life, or un-forgiveness towards another and/or towards yourself. Be willing to let go of all physical, emotional, mental and spiritual effects of trauma, hurtful words, spiteful actions and wrong thinking both towards you and you towards others.*

2. Light a white glass encased 7-day Candle (also known as deity or sanctuary candle); Offer prayers of gratitude to Creator/God/ Goddess for the good medicine, the gift of the plants that you're using which Creator has given us to use for our healing and well-being; ask for protection and blessings from Creator, Good Healing Spirits, Holy Ancestors, Grandmother Moon, and your Guides.



Baños Medicinales (Medicinal Baths) by Diego Isaias Hernandez

3. Bring to a gentle boil in very large pot, a very generous handful each of: rue, white sage, and basil. It's usually a good idea to place all your plants into a large cheesecloth or old clean pillowcase so that the leaves and stems do not clog your drain. You may also bundle them together so that you can use them to brush your body as you bath or shower.

4. Once the water and plants have come to a boil, remove carefully and add the herbal water to your already warm bath water in the bathtub and soak in it for at least 15 minutes. You can repeat the prayers you offered earlier. I recommend the following phrase to my clients and students: "I now return any energy that I may have taken from someone, knowingly or unknowingly, to its source, with blessings of peace and love; AND I call back any of my own personal power or energy that I have given away, knowingly or unknowingly that I may restored to wholeness and balance." Say this out loud, or mentally, three times. Then sit in stillness...feel peace in your heart.

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A TUB: YOU CAN POUR THE HERBAL WATER OVER YOUR HEAD AND BODY in your shower stall; do your best to make sure that the water touches every part of your body. Do not rinse off. Air dry as much as possible. Refrain from watching

violent movies or being around persons who do not support your dreams and spiritual path for at least 3 days. Refrain from this bath if you are pregnant or have health issues such as high blood pressure.

This passage affirms the holistic qualities of curanderismo that address the physical, spiritual, and psychological dimensions of the person. The limpieza, as described above, illustrates the importance of gaining a sense of self through meditation and contemplation but also through letting go of the self or at least that aspect that we call the “ego.”

This passage also illustrates how curanderismo dovetails with many aspects of modern biomedical practice. For e.g., the last sentence in this passage warns against the use of these methods among pregnant women or persons with high blood pressure. Scholarly studies by Townsend ([The Aztecs](#)) and others confirm that Mesoamerican medical practices before contact included the [use of passionflower](#) extract as a recommended treatment for high blood pressure, which was already recognized and treated by Mexica practitioners as early as the 12th century (A.C.E.).



'El Curanderismo' by [Pedro Azabache](#)

Indigenous medicine, healing, and struggles for justice

It would be a mistake to consider the contemporary resurgence of curanderismo without also accounting for the conditions associated with disparities in health care access and quality for Mexican-origin working class, immigrant, and indigenous populations in the United States. The fact of structural violence involving systematic denial of the services and resources required for life has been indisputably documented and highlighted by the work of researchers like Paul Farmer, Karina Walters, and Henry Herrera.

However, this resurgence is not just simply associated with grassroots responses to a widespread lack of access to health insurance and health care, it is also part of the so-called Latina/o health paradox and thus a matter of the self-willing enactment of alterNative medical paradigms and practices. The resurgence of curanderismo is [a cultural and political phenomenon](#) and unless we grasp this fact it will be difficult to assess and interpret its significance and larger implications.

Eliseo ‘Cheo’ Torres, a professor and administrator at University of New Mexico (UNM), is the author of an early respected study of curanderismo, [The Folk Healer: The Mexican-American Tradition of Curanderismo](#) (1984; 2nd edition 2005). He makes an important observation about the resurgence of indigenous medicine in a [recent article](#), noting how this is about

...a concept of fusing traditional and modern medicine, similar to what Chinese medicine has done for years, which is to deliver patient care according to the culture, needs, and affordability of the person...As we move into the new millennium it appears that people want to be more in charge of their health. Throughout the world there is a growing concern that Western medicine may not provide all the answers...Many recent Latino immigrants and undocumented workers in the United States are uninsured or underinsured, and as a result they

are often forced to rely on the charity of municipal healthcare systems. Because of this, some may not seek care when they need it, while others have to wait in overburdened emergency rooms to be treated as indigents...people have had to find other ways to get treatment for illness...One way has been to continue to rely on folk healers who have provided basic care in rural villages for centuries...The trick is to bring Curanderismo in line with conventional medicine – and vice-versa, so that folk healers can work in tandem with and supplement modern medicine...

Professor Torres is highlighting the twin aspects of the resurgence: The problems posed by structural violence and disparities in access to quality healthcare and the proactive forces associated with the decline of trust in Western medicine and the desire to reconnect with cultural traditions that have served the community well in the past. This is also obviously not a simple attack on Western medicine or some fatalistic relapse into superstition and witchcraft; it is instead a wise and empirically-grounded call for a more integrated and interdisciplinary approach to healthcare that increasing numbers of Western biomedical model healthcare practitioners and physicians are recognizing as legitimate and necessary.

There is a final set of observations to bring this missive on indigenous medicine, a.k.a. ethnomedicine, to a close: The resurgence of curanderismo is part of the social movements for environmental and social justice. A significant impetus for the self-provisioning of traditional healthcare resides in the experience of racism and racialization that Mexican-origin peoples confront across the entire spectrum of healthcare services and settings.

The politicization of healthcare by the current wave of anti-immigrant hysteria and nativism has only served to exacerbate already marginalized positions. This is not the first time that racism and nativism affect Latina/o access to healthcare. As Professor Natalia Molina observes in her book, *Fit to be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939*:

Health injuries and environmental injustices have served as the rallying point for Mexicans at other times...The United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, demonstrating how social and environmental struggles come together, fought to ban the use of pesticides...The very forms of racialization that have harmed and excluded communities of color, eventually, become focal points for solidarity and collective mobilizations aimed at turning negative ascription and exclusion into positive affirmation and empowerment. (p. 188)

The resurgence of curanderismo is an example of this type of social movement transformation and mobilization and it is largely being led by *las parteras*, the midwives who provide the birthing and postpartum healthcare to a growing number of Mexican women, Chicanas, and other Latinas. As the biopolitics of reproduction, largely expressed through the state of exception, reduce the value of the lives of women of color, our modern day *tetlacuicuiliques* are mobilizing together to bring quality health care to marginalized and middle-class professional women and contributing in no small manner to the struggle for indigenous autonomy, north and south of the border.

According to my graduate student, Claudia Serrato, there are now curandera and partera networks and cooperatives in the Los Angeles basin and other metropolitan areas. These networks and co-ops are dedicated to quality healthcare and the revival of traditional indigenous cultural values and practices.

Our next post in this series will focus on how this movement and resurgence of indigenous medicine is also changing the way we eat and view nutrition.

Resources for further learning

The [University of New Mexico](#), in part as a result of the presence of Professor Eliseo Torres, has created a major curanderismo research and learning project. I am posting a YouTube documentary

video produced by the UNM Curanderismo Project. for the benefit of our readers and followers.

For an unlisted documentary video from the UNM Curanderismo Program please use the link below:

<http://youtu.be/SEzvf33twBU>

Select annotated bibliography by [Lu Liñan](#)

Agosin, Marjorie. *Brujas y algo mas—Witches and Other Things*. Pittsburgh: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1984.

Bilingual poetry written about three women's feelings and sentiments about a variety of topics, including life, death, happiness, neurosis, abortion. The writing communicates a universality of experience even when experienced in different cultures.

Anaya, Rudolfo A. *Bless Me, Ultima*. Berkeley, CA: Tonatiuh-Quinto Sol International, 1972.

Novel about a curandera who comes to live with the Marez family in New Mexico. She befriends a young boy named Antonio who is struggling with his spiritual self; through the friendship, he comes to understand life and nature and how these two go hand in hand.

Garza, Mary Jane. "Healing Spirits." *Hispanic Magazine*, June 1998.

Article about the Latin American folk healing tradition known as curanderismo. The author writes about legendary curanderos who practice their skills in the Southwest and northern Mexico.

Kanellos, Nicolas. *Hispanic American Literature*. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995.

Anthology that includes autobiographies, fiction, poetry, and drama written by several Hispanic authors. Two readings from this book that relate to the unit are "The Curing Woman" by Alejandro Morales and "Curandera" by Pat Mora.

Kiev, Ari. *Curanderismo: Mexican-American Folk Psychiatry*. New York: The Free Press 1968.

Book about the different aspects of curanderismo, including psychiatric and psychological topics. Addresses the therapeutic value of curanderismo and offers views of how curanderismo alleviates or enhances the medicinal practice of the holistic healer and the patient.

Navarro-Richardson, Dr. Julian. *Cura Natural de Las Enfermedades*. Editorial Posada, S.A., Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Posada, S.A., 1983.

This book written in Spanish explains the natural state of health and how to prevent an unnatural state of health. This book also covers medicinal practices by defining the sickness and prescribing holistic remedies to combat the illness.

Pedretti, Dr. Marzio. *Curación con las Hierbas*. Spain: Editorial De Vecchi, S.A., GERSA, Industria Grafica, 1984.

This book is a small encyclopedia-type reference about plants and herbs and how they can be utilized for medicinal purposes. It also includes the time of the month and the time of day to collect these plants.

Torres, Eliseo. *The Folk Healer: The Mexican-American Tradition of Curanderismo*. Kingsville, TX: Nieves Press, 1984.

Short book about the beliefs and practices of curanderismo. Also, short synopses of famous curanderos(as) such as Don Pedrito, Nino Fidencio, Teresita, and Jewel Babb. Definition and treatments for some ailments that are commonly used by curanderos(as).

Trotter, Robert T., II and Juan Antonio Chavira. *Curanderismo*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1981.

This book is an ethnography of the healing theories and practices of curanderos, brought about as a part of a grant given to acquaint health care professionals in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas with Mexican-Americans and the practices of curanderismo. This book discusses history, cultural context of illness, theories of healing, the different levels of curanderismo, and the future of this practice.

Remedios Caseros. *The Doctor's Book of Home Remedies*. Traducción: Monica Stajnsznadger, Rodale Press, Inc., Grupo Editorial Ceac, S.A., Peru, Barcelona, 1990.

This book, written in Spanish, contains simple remedies gathered from many doctors to alleviate more than 130 medical problems. This book prescribes home treatment for

acne, cholesterol, cuts, dandruff, bad breath, impotency, and many other common ailments.

Simpson, Lesley Byrd. *Many Mexicos*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941.

This book covers the history and culture of Mexico from its inception to the political and economic welfare state right after the Mexican Revolution. This book contains a brief history of curanderos and their effect on the religious beliefs of the early Spaniards and the pre-Columbian [sic] population.

West, John O. *Mexican-American Folklore*. Little Rock, AR: August House, 1988.

Excellent reference book for anyone interested in Mexican-American culture. Has many insights into the customs and traditions of the Southwest. Good information on curanderismo and curanderos(as).

Posted 8th August 2012 by [Devon G. Peña](#)

Queer Shamanism: Intersexed, Bi, & Transgendered Shamans



Men-Women, Gatekeepers, and Fairy Mounds

by RANDY P. L. CONNER

(Parabola, SPRING, February 2000. Volume 25, No.1, pp. 71 - 77)

<http://www.intersex.org.za/index.php/en/publications/about-intersex/51-men-women-gatekeepers-and-fairy-mounds>

People who leave behind traditional gender roles become bridges to the Other.

Long ago, the Tewa people of southwestern North America lived beneath the surface of a lake. For a long time, they lived without guidance. One day, they learned of a mysterious being who was both male and female, and they wondered if this being might guide them to another world where they might find a better life. Three times they called this being by the name of kwih-doh, which means "man-woman, " but they received no reply. Before giving up, they called upon the being a fourth time. This time, the being appeared and answered, "Yes, I am a kwih-doh, and I will guide you. "

With this, the man-woman, a shaman named Kanyotsanyotse, left the lake and travelled north, west, east, and south, asking the spirits and animals of each place if they would receive his-her people

should they decide to journey and perhaps settle there. One day, the man-woman returned and, having found a good place for the people to dwell, led them from the lake to the world above. Not surprisingly, the journey of the man- woman originates in water, which is of ten symbolic of liminal states, including gendered and erode fluidity.

Numerous deities and spirits of other traditions express similar connections between liminality and gendered or erode diversity. Associated with Amazonian behavior and with intimacy between women, the Mediterranean Artemis/Diana is frequently linked to moments of transition. She is the "one who looses" or who sets free and is the "goddess of the 'out there.'" Within her cult, her priestesses metamorphose into wolves and bears, and she is the patron of "all those who live outside the social order," including "outlaws and strangers."

Legba, a deity of West African origin revered in Vodoun, inhabits threshold sites including crossroads or intersections, and as a divine intercessory serves as a guardian of and a guide across the borders of the worlds of the living, the dead, and the lwas (the gods). Ogundipe, a Yoruba scholar, stresses that Legba is "certainly not restricted to human distinctions of gender or sex; he is at once both male and female." This androgynous quality is reflected in the very design of the Vodoun temple, the ounfo. While the central pole of the temple, the potomitan, represents Legba's "phallus... the open space around it... is his womb."

The plump, elephant-headed Hindu deity Ganesha is likewise associated with the threshold and with the blurring of gender distinctions. As the loyal son of the goddess Parvati, Ganesha guards her bedchamber. In this capacity, he is described as a "protean, liminal character" who "stand [s] on the threshold between the profane world . . . and the sacred territory," who "protect[s] the purity of the inner shrine," and who "provides access to the other gods and goddesses." Ganesha's head is that of a female elephant, while his torso is that of a human male. Even Ganesha's male torso

is, however, perceived as androgynous; his softness, plumpness, and breasts are viewed as feminine. Moreover, both his "perpetually flaccid trunk" and his role as bringer of rain indicate an association with eunuchs, considered liminal figures in the Hindu cosmos. Ganesha is also associated with homoeroticism, by way of both the upanayana ritual, which may include an intimate relationship between master and disciple, and his patronage of the muladhara chakra. This chakra signifies not only the threshold leading to the awakening of the kundalini but also to the practice of cultic homoeroticism.

IN MANY CULTURES, individuals whose expression of gender lies beyond the bounds of masculine-feminine duality- like the deities above- have been envisioned, in the terms of cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, as "threshold persons." As such, they are thought to inhabit the threshold or limen- the border, margin, or outskirts of a certain place- or to traverse it as they journey to another, often wild, magical, or "topsy-turvy" region of the cosmos. These "threshold persons" may also manifest- or else may be joined by others who manifest- erotic diversity in the form of same-sex intimacy or transgendered intimacy. Transgendered intimacy refers to that shared by a man-woman or woman-man with a traditionally masculine male or feminine female, or else with another gender-crossing or gender-mixing person.

Such threshold persons often serve their communities as guardians of and guides across the threshold. In this capacity, they empower others to traverse liminal regions which might otherwise prove unnavigable. The kwih-doh Kanyotsanyotse is an archetypal embodiment of the androgynous shaman.

Threshold persons such as the kwih-doh have traditionally been bestowed with names or descriptions expressing their gender liminality, their 'betwixt-and-between' identities. While the transgendered priestesses of the Mesopotamian Inanna-Ishtar are sal-zikrum, "women-men," or sinnishanu, "like women," the galli or

gallae of the Greco-Roman goddess Rhea-Cybele are semi-viri, "half-men," or anandreies, "not men."

Among the Aleuts of northeastern Siberia, gender-mixing shamans are called ne-uchica, "appareled like a woman" or yirka'la'ul, "males transformed into persons of the softer sex." Ishquicuink is the name traditionally given to males who assist curanderas (female healers) among the Kechki people of Guatemala; the name describes a male who "sometimes acts like a man and sometimes like a woman." Similarly, the female-to-male shih fu ("stone maiden") shamans of ancient China have been described as "not male, not female," while the male-to-female wikiga-winagu of Okinawa are said to have undergone a ritual of winagunati, "becoming a woman."

Some names reflect liminality in other ways, such as in terms of location. Both the Greek name for the transgendered votaries of Rhea-Cybele, metragyrtes, and the name of the male priestesses of the Hindu goddess Yellamma, jogappa, refer to a spiritual life of wandering. Still others have been described in terms that express states of consciousness. For instance, the anatomically male, gender-mixing shih-niang or "master girl" shamans of ancient China have been depicted as "not dreaming and not awake." The ne-uchica, kwih-doh, and other such shamans are especially known for journeys involving metaphysical death and rebirth, and for traversing thresholds between the worlds on journeys of soul retrieval.

Among the Dagara of Ghana, Ivory Coast, Togo, and Burkina Faso, androgynous, homoerotically-inclined, or bisexual individuals serve their communities as threshold guardians and guides. As such, they are known, according to Malidoma and Sobonfu Some, as "gatekeepers." Sobonfu Some observes, "Gatekeepers are people who live a life at the edge between two worlds- the world of the village and the world of spirit... The gatekeepers stand on the threshold of the gender line. They are mediators between the two genders. They make sure that there is peace and balance between women and men." This is also a role traditionally played by the gender-mixing,

homoerotically inclined ha-na of the Mazatecs of Mexico.

Malidoma Some describes Dagara gatekeepers as beings bridging "this world and the other world" who "experience a state of vibrational consciousness which is far higher, and far different, from the one that a normal person would experience." Sobonfu notes that as such, gatekeepers "have access to other-dimensional beings ... who are very magical and knowledgeable." Malidoma posits that gatekeepers "are not of this world. They come from the Otherworld ... they were sent here to keep the gates open to the Other-world." He elaborates, "You decide that you will be a gatekeeper before you are born. ... So when you arrive here, you begin to vibrate in a way that Elders can detect as meaning that you are connected with a gateway somewhere."

The Somes stress the importance of gatekeepers to the village as a whole. Sobonfu observes, "gatekeepers are encouraged to fulfill the role they're born to, to use their gifts in the interests of the community." Perhaps most remarkable is the Dagara belief that if the gatekeepers are relieved of duty or disappear, apocalypse will surely follow: "If the gates are shut, this is when the earth, Mother Earth, will shake- because it has no more reason to be alive, it will shake itself, and we will be in deep trouble."

IN NUMEROUS CULTURES, the associations described herein are not limited to a special class of threshold persons but may also be experienced by more general populations through participation in rites of passage and liminal festivities, or else by paying visits to liminal sites. For instance, to return to the Tewa, young persons traditionally took part in a ritual held in the kiva in which they were asked by a shaman, "Are you a man?" to which both males and females would respond "yes." They were then asked, "Are you a woman?" to which they would also collectively respond "yes." The shaman then said to the initiates, "If you are a man, and if you are a woman, then you can be a bear," underscoring the association of gender liminality with fluidity and metamorphosis.⁹ In Western

culture, festivities such as Halloween, Carnival, and Mardi Gras permit otherwise ordinary people to experience these associations temporarily within themselves, celebrating fluidity and metamorphosis through costuming and particularly transvestism.

Visits to special wilderness and urban sites may also trigger threshold experiences within the wider population. Among the latter, the tavern is significant. In premodern Europe, it was primarily in taverns that scholars and students came into contact with threshold persons who introduced them to experiences they might otherwise never have known. In Richard Devize's Chronicle (1192), we find that such threshold persons included "actors, jesters... Moors ... pretty boys, effeminates ... belly-dancers, sorceresses . . . night-wanderers, magicians, [and] mimes."

While mujun is a multivalent term used to describe bawdy literature, mad-cap behavior, pantheistic sentiment, and many other things, it also refers to the bohemian subculture of the Arabic world, concentrated in tavern settings.

"These taverns were places where many kinds of pleasure were served up.. .. Singers, dancers... homosexuals of both sexes, taught the art of pleasure . . . mujun was an ars vitae, a permanent carpe diem." Here, "homosexuality, so violently condemned by Islam, could be ... widely practiced among both men and women." Among the chief expressions of homoeroticism- sometimes sublimated, sometimes not- occurring in taverns were those linked to the sama', Sufi rites frequently held there. "Do you want a guided tour/ of the Mecca of Love?" the thirteenth-century poet al-Iraqi asks; "Come, sit in the tavern."

Among rural liminal sites, the rainbow and mounds thought to be inhabited by fairies occupy a central place in European myth and spirituality. In pre-modern France and Eastern Europe, many imagined that a person might change sex by passing under the rainbow. Some Rumanians further imagined that the "rainbow stands

with each end in a river, and anyone creeping into its end on hands and knees and drinking the water it touches will instantly change sex.”

[...]

In The Fruitful Darkness, Joan Halifax describes the threshold as a territory . . . where the boundaries of the self are tested. In the Threshold we experience ourselves as multiplex. We are both mortal and god, human and creature, wild and cultured, male and female.

Much of the information found herein is derived from Cassell's Encyclopedia of Queer Myth, Symbol, and Spirit by Randy P. Conner, David H. Sparks, and Mariya Sparks (London: Cassell, 1997)."

Two-Spirit People: Gender Variance & Resistance in Onkwehón:we Culture

MAY 18, 2013 BY ENAEMAEHKIW TÚPAC KESHENA



Crow Two-Spirits

The following was written by myself, Enaemaehkiw Túpac Keshena, in it's original form back in the winter and early spring of 2009, originally for akademik purposes. It has since then been modified and altered significantly, and while I still do not consider this a perfect article by any stretch I do believe that it serves as a sufficient introduction to overstanding an incredibly broad and complex subject that spans the millennia, both before and after the White Death of 1492.

I have made the decision to re-publish this article here in the context of the current debate regarding gender, transgenderism and feminist analysis in and around the radical ecological resistance organization known as [Deep Green Resistance](#). I have made this decision because what has been missing from this discussion thus far has been an indigenous perspective – one that understands colonization,

decolonization and how both of those intersection of European Grand Patriarchy and the struggle against it.

Additionally, over the years i've moved from what might be described as a "techno-utopian" position on the ecological crisis to one that understands the need for a critical of industrialism and industrial civilization more generally. So i have come to appreciate much of Jensens' writings on ecology and also the sense of urgency that he, DGR and others have attempted to build around the general ecological crisis that threatens the future of this planet as we know it.

So despite disagreeing with the radical feminist analysis, which i feel can be both eurocentric and ahistorical, i contribute this article in a comradely fashion in the spirit of unity-struggle-unity. For OR's own perspective on two-spirit/trans liberation, as well as our use of same-gender loving (SGL) rather than lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) when referring to the struggles of sexually-variant colonized peoples, please refer to our [Basic Points of Unity](#).

Finally I want to make it clear that say what one will about the particular DGR line that has become the focus of this controversy, what has been most outrageously unacceptable is the fact that wimmin involved in DGR have been intimidated, threatened with murder and other forms of violence because of it. Part of these often intensely misogynistic attacks (which often have not happened in the light of day, or rather Facebook) has been the threat of rape and sexual violence against these DGR organizers. Onkwehón:we Rising stands resolutely against these obscene, misogynist threats.

Introduction: Gender Variance Within the Oppressor Nation

Unlike much of the rest of the world the settler nation has long defined itself through adherence to patriarchal social and cultural traditions, not the least of which is the judeo-christian religion. As such, in the culture of the settler nation gender expression has historically been viewed as a simple binary divided into polar opposites: male and female, masculine and feminine.

However, even within the settler oppressor nation, below the surface mainstream of the mainstream culture, there has always been gender variable people and cross-dressers. This has historically especially been so within the lesbian, gay and

bisexual (community) community where the archetypes of the drag queen and stone butch have been present for some time.

In the years since the emergence of the modern gay and lesbian liberation movement within the settler nation after the 1969 Stonewall Riot in New York City there has been a growth in the visibility of those whose gender expression does not conform to the hegemonic settler culture's simplistic binary. In the 1990s authors and activists like Leslie Feinberg of the Workers World Party helped to popularize within the settler left the existence of gender benders, gender blenders, gender changers and a myriad of others people with gender variable identities.

A further development has been that today transgendered and transsexual people, as well as intersexed people, have largely become integrated into the lesbian, gay and bisexual fight for social acceptance and equal rights within the colonial society. This can be seen in the most often used acronym to describe the movement – LGBT.

Now the bulk of what once was the LGBT liberation movement in the settler nation has morphed into the modern LGBT rights movement, ever eager to remove what remaining barriers (such as ability to serve in the military and become married) that continue to prevent full integration into imperialist settler society. Still, the oppression of LGBT people remains a site of potential dissent and resistance to the dominant power from within the settler nation itself, though they must align their struggles with the struggles of the colonized in order to win true liberation.

However, despite the emphasis on the struggles of mainstream LGBT community from the factions that make up the modern White 'left', their story is not the full story of the history of gender & sexual variance, oppression and resistance within the borders of north america.

Gender & Sexuality in Onkwehón:we Cultures

Long before the arrival of the first european settlers the cultures of many of our nations had what would today be recognized as institutionalized gender and sexual variability. This institutionalized practice was once referred to by the term berdache by settler academics – including anthropologists, historians, sociologists, psychologists and sexologists. However this term is now considered a pejorative by many indigenous people (Jacobs et al. 1997:2).

Rather, the term Two-Spirit, which is a translation of the Anishinaabek term *niizhmanidoowag*, has been taken up by members of our communities. It was first adopted in 1990 at the third conference of *onkwehón:we same-gender loving people in Winnipeg* (Roscoe 1998:109) as an alternative to the offensive use of *berdache*.

Emerging from the usage of modern same-gender loving *onkwehón:we* as well as those people who would have traditionally been labelled as *berdache* by Western scholars, Two-Spirit now refers to a number of gender identities, both contemporary and historical, within our cultures, ranging from modern same-gender loving bisexual and gender variable individuals to the traditions of many of our nations in which multiple gender and sexual variations were accepted and institutionalized in the culture.

The goal of this article is to examine the institution of the Two-Spirit person as it represents gender and sexual variability across our cultures and societies. It will examine both the historical institutionalization of multiple genders and sexual expressions in many of our cultures at the time of first contact with European ‘civilization’, and the roles that such individuals fulfilled, as well as the modern movements to reclaim of the concept by modern same-gender loving and gender variable people within our communities.

Gender & Sexuality At the Time of Contact

According to settler anthropologist Harriet Whitehead’s article *The Bow and the Burden Strap: A New Look at Institutionalized Homosexuality in Native North America* “a social gender dichotomy is present in all known societies in the sense that everywhere anatomic sexual differences observable at birth are used to start tracking the newborn into one or the other of two social role complexes.” (1981:57) Whitehead explains that it is this attaching of gender and related social roles and relations to biological sex at birth that is at the core of why gender dichotomy exists.

However, she also notes that there are also often a host of other factors that vary across cultures and often come into play in defining one’s gender, ranging from ideas of fate, an individual’s temperament, or suspected spiritual power, or the mythical history of the culture into which they are born. Whitehead further points out that in many of the cultures of our nations these kinds of secondary characteristics of an individual tend to form clusters, with maybe one feature that

forms the core of the cluster (Whitehead 1981:57). The result of this in onkwehón:we society was the development of the institution of the Two-Spirit person, who is a biological female or male who takes on the gender roles and associated social relations and obligations of the traditionally opposite gender.

Western knowledge of gender and sexual variability in our cultures has been around since the first sustained contact between our people and the European nation.

In his book *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* William Roscoe retells the account of Edwin T. Denig, a colonial trader who in 1833 traveled up the Missouri river and spent twenty-three years working for the American Fur Company in the territory of the Absaroka (Crow) nation. According to Roscoe, Denig found himself in a land populated not only by an unfamiliar people with foreign customs, but, most shocking for this settler man, found himself among a people for whom “some of the important and respected individuals were men and women who in American and European societies would be condemned, persecuted, jailed, even executed.” (1998:3) In the culture that Denig had left the lifestyles of these people that he encountered in Absaroka country would have been considered immoral, perverse, and ultimately condemned as being unnatural (Roscoe 1998:3). The presence of gender and sexual variability among our people marks perhaps one of the starkest areas in which our civilizations and the culture of the Europeans differed.

Edwin T. Denig’s encounter with Two-Spirit people amongst the Absaroka is far from a unique experience, and was also far from the first time that this type of meeting between our cultures had happened. Indeed, as Roscoe notes, “Europeans had been encountering ‘berdaches’...since the days of Spanish conquest.” (1998:4) In her article *Various Kinds of Two-Spirit People: Gender*

Variance and Homosexuality in Native American Communities, Sabine Lang notes that:

Ever since Europeans came into contact with North American Indian cultures, there have been reports on Native American males who partially or completely take up the culturally defined roles of women in their respective communities, doing women’s work and feminine arts or crafts, such as beadwork, pottery, and basketry; sometimes wearing women’s clothes; and often entering into sexual relationships or marriages with men. (1997:100)

One can see this in the account of Spanish conqueror Cabeza de Vaca, who traveled amongst the Auiia (Karankawa) nation in what is today called Texas. He said of his journeys “in the time that I continued among them, I saw a most brutish and beastly custom, to wit, a male who was married to another, and these be effeminate and impotent men, who goe clothed and attired like women, and performe the office of a womale.” (Roscoe 1998:4) Denig’s response to the presence of Two-Spirit people was also far from new. During the Spanish conquest of the Turtle Island, in which the settlers encountered Two-Spirits in virtually every nation they ‘met’, the settlers reacted to Two-Spirit people with everything from amazement, to disgust and biblically justified violence (Roscoe 1998:4).

It also should be noted also that gender variability did not only take the form of men who took up the roles and dress of wimmin, but also wimmin who lived, partially or entirely, with a male gender expression. However, because of the fact that many male Two-Spirited individuals entered into sexual or marital relationships with men, leading to the long time interpretation that institutionalized Two-Spirit roles were an attempt to integrate so-called ‘deviant’ male homosexuality into various onkwehón:we cultures, the phenomenon of male Two-Spirited has often been the primary focus scholarly literature on the topic.

As such, according to Lang “females taking up the ways of men were not included in discussions of the Two-Spirit.” (1997:101) The fact is though that both male and female Two-Spirit individuals existed in many of our cultures, ranging from the nádleehé of the Navajo, the winkte of the Lakota, the warharmi of the Kamia, the ihamalea of the Zuni to the hwame of the Mohave (Lang 1997:100).

There is much discussion surrounding the relationship between sexual orientation and gender expression in our cultures. In contrast to the notion that the institution of the Two-Spirit was an attempt to integrate ‘deviant’ sexual behaviour Lang puts forward the argument that an individual’s identity as Two-Spirit had much more to do with their occupational preferences and personality traits than the type of body that they desire sexually (1997:101). Further, it should be noted that a number of reports of Two-Spirit males living with wimmin, and even having sexual relationships with them have been overlooked or ignored by much of the literature.

There are reports of at least twenty nations where male Two-Spirits where this is exactly the case, and at least that many regarding cases where they have no sexual relations at all, with either men or wimmin (Lang 1997:102). A similar problem

exists with regards to reports of female Two-Spirits who entered into relationships with men (Lang 1997:102). It is also important to take note of the fact that, according to Lang, the “culturally defined roles for individuals who one way or another are reversing or blending gender roles in our cultures are as diverse as those cultures themselves.” (1997:101)

The Construction of Gender in Onkwehón:we Cultures

A key notion to grasp in all of this here is the nature of how gender is culturally constructed. This is a process that takes place in all cultures. Specifically, the process of the cultural construction of gender as it is being used here, according to Whitehead, refers to “the ideas that give social meaning to physical differences between the sexes, rendering two biological classes, male and female, into two social classes, men and women, and making the social relationships in which men and women stand toward each other appear reasonable and appropriate.” (1981:57)

As has been stated already, there was a great amount of diversity cross-culturally in that each individual culture differed on what exactly its culturally defined gender roles and social relations were, however a majority of indigenous cultures had a definition of gender that explicitly allowed for the construction of more than the standardly accepted two genders of male and female (in the settler nation) (Lang 1997:103). The result of this in onkwehón:we cultures is that it allowed for the growth, and eventual institutionalization, of a wide range of gender variable Two-Spirit traditions.

The Role of Two-Spirit in Traditional Onkwehón:we Cultures

Traditionally in our cultures Two-Spirit people fulfilled a number of important social roles beyond the culturally determined gender roles that they take up. It has long been noted in the scholarly literature that Two-Spirit people have played an important aspect in the ritual aspect of many of our cultures, and often were perceived as being imbued with a large amount of spiritual power. In *Sex Life and Marriage from The Crow Indians* Robert Lowie notes that “the task of chopping down the first tree for the Sun Dance lodge specifically devolved on a berdache.” (1956:50)

Similarly, in her book *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, Paula Gunn Allen notes that the *koshkalaka*, the female Two-Spirit counter-part to the *winkte* amongst the Lakota are seen to have quite a bit of

spiritual power, though not without a cost, as she notes that their power is not to “determine [their] own and others’ action.’ Rather is consists of the ability to manipulate physical and nonphysical reality towards certain ends. When this power is used to determine others’ actions, it at least borders on black magic or sorcery.” (1992:258)

Outside of the cultural zone of the Great Plains, Arnold R. Pilling in *Cross-Dressing and Shamanism among Selected Western American Tribes* notes several instances among our cultures where Two-Spirit people play a central role, such as in the Kachina dance of the Zuni people (1997:70) and cross-dressing shamans and medicine men among the Wapato group of Tualatin in northern Oregon and Tolowa of northwestern California (1997:74).

The Fate of Two-Spirit People With Contact

However, much of these traditional roles and practices, even the institution of the Two-Spirit person itself, began to disappear after the arrival of European colonialism. With the European settler colonists also came European judeo-christian values and norms about gender and sexuality, which, needless to say, were starkly different than those of onkwehón:we.

It has already been noted how the first European conquerors and explorers reacted in a number of ways at the existence of Two-Spirit people, including with violence. In one very telling example of the violent ways in which Europeans attempted at times to eliminate Two-Spirit people, Roscoe recounts the story of Vasco Núñez de Balba who upon encountering “forty pathicosfoemineoamictu (male homosexuals dressed as women) in Panama, he had them put to the dogs.” (1998:4) One Catholic theologian a century later would applaud de Balba’s violence by anointing his actions as being those of an honourable Catholic Spaniard (Roscoe 1998:4).

The result of this onslaught on the institution and practice of the Two-Spirit, which included not only physical violence directed at those people who were part of the group, but also the cultural colonization of the indigenous population, especially with the imposition of the Christian religion and judeo-Christian European ideas on gender and sexuality is that by the time of the early 20th century there was fear that the Two-Spirit institution had ceased to exist in certain areas of Turtle Island. For some time the male Two-Spirit person Kasinelu was labelled by some scholars as the last Zuni Two-Spirit person (Pilling 1997:71).

Several authors also have noted the emergence of a modern kind homophobia and transphobia in our communities and the problem this has caused for the continuity of the Two-Spirit tradition. Pilling retells the story of the Zuni Two-Spirited person Kasinelu who sought the approval of his mother and mother's mother for his lifestyle as a Two-Spirit person as in Zuni society it is an individual's mother and mother's mother who has have the most say regarding their behaviour. Pilling notes that while Kasinelu did have the blessing of his mother and mother's mother for his Two-Spirit identity, he did face some opposition from his father Nayuchi. Pilling suspects that Nayuchi's opposition to Kasinelu's identity may have been an early example of homophobia in onkwehón:we society (1997:70).

This has continued to be the case in many onkwehón:we communities down to the modern day. The Yup'ik author Anguksuar also notes the prevalence of homophobia in our modern communities, saying that "many Native people had become homophobic and acquired other forms of intolerance in recent generations." (1997:220) Michael Red Earth, of the Sisseton Dakota nation, in his autobiographical article Traditional Influences on a Contemporary Gay Identified Sisseton Dakota explores the problem of homophobia within our communities in the modern day . Himself a gay-identified he describes the dissonance between his more traditionalist reservation-based extended family and his urban dwelling assimilationist nuclear family, and especially the role that the colonially imposed christian boarding schools for onkwehón:we youth had on his mother and her sisters in creating this situation. On this Red Earth says "the policy at the Indian boarding schools was to re-educate and assimilate Indian into settler culture. Expressions of Indian heritage were suppressed and punished." (1997:210) Red Earth also describes that after he came out to his urban non-traditional family they became quite upset, and he attributes this to the effect of the boarding schools on his family (1997:213).

The Modern Revival and Evolution of Two-Spirit Identity

However, despite these threats to the continuity of the Two-Spirit institution at the hands of five centuries of sustained colonial assaults on it and its basis in our cultural constructions of gender, there is currently a modern movement to revive the term and its original meanings within our communities.

The modern Two-Spirit movement is a contemporary development that has emerged from the same-gender loving onkwehón:we underground community beginning in the 1990s. The initial impetus for this movement actually comes as

the result of academic and scholarly work on traditional onkwehón:we ideas on gender and sexuality in the 1980s. As a result of these works, such as Walter Williams' *The Spirit and the Flesh*, the mainstream same-gender loving community in north amerika began to embrace the notion of a north amerika that was tolerant of gender and sexual variability before colonialism, especially as a counter to the treatment of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in within the settler nation.

However, true to the parasitic and opportunistic nature of most movements that have historically grown out of the settler nation, this settler LGBT romanticism of how our cultures were prior to colonization has lead to a number of mainstream same-gender loving organizations attempting to appropriate the old offensive term berdache, and even the our current concept of Two-Spirit. Because of this colonizing way in which the settler LGBT movements have interacted with same-gender loving onkwehón:we and their struggles, many groups decided to reclaim their heritage and traditions, and in the early 1990s they decided to reject the term berdache and proposed the use of the term Two-Spirit to describe themselves (Gilley 2006:25).

According to Brian Joseph Gilley, author of *Becoming Two-Spirit: Gay Identity and Social Acceptance in Indian Country*, this coordinated rejection of the colonial term berdache and embracing of Two-Spirit accomplished two primary goals “it removed the negativity of colonial impression of Native gender diversity and wrangled the concept away from the popular gay community.” (2006:25)

Superficially this has allowed for a partial separation of the onkwehón:we same-gender loving community from the predominantly mainstream same-gender loving community of the settler nation, thus allowing them the opportunity to develop independently, but more importantly, the embracing of the concept of Two-Spirit by many contemporary same-gender loving onkwehón:we has allowed them find an identity for themselves that relies less on their sexual orientation, and more on drawing from their heritage as indigenous people (Gilley 2006:25).

Gilley notes that with “the knowledge that gender-different persons historically were respected in their communities, indigenous same-gender loving people began to emphasize their cultural heritage through the establishment of Two-Spirit as a kind of personhood and as a socially observable fact.” (2006:29)

As the use of the term Two-Spirit has increased in popularity the flexibility of it as a concept has allowed many more people to feel a connection to their indigenous heritage that may usually be unavailable to them or discouraged for reasons ranging from issues of blood quantum to physical appearance (Gilley 2006:30). For those of us who lived in their traditional communities the concept of Two-Spirit allowed them to bring together their sexual orientation and indigenous heritage within the cultural and social sphere of their traditions (Gilley 2006:32).

Outside of the community of same-gender loving onkwehón:we, the notion of being Two-Spirit has also been picked up by modern-day indigenous transsexuals and transgenderists, who may or may not identify as a homosexual. In his book *Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink or Blue*, north american transgender activist and author Leslie Feinberg interviews Gary Bowen, an Apache, on the interplay between his status as a transperson and as an indigenous person. Bowen says that once he “figured out that ‘transgendered’ was someone who transcended traditional stereotypes of ‘male’ and ‘womyn,’ I saw that I was such a person. I began a quest for finding words that described myself.” (Feinberg 1998:63) In the case of Bowen this was a journey that eventually culminated in his acceptance of his trans nature as gift from the creator. Specifically he says “my own transgendered state is a sacred calling given to me by Spirit, not a neurosis discovered by white medicine.” (Feinberg 1998:63) Bowen goes on to say that he does not accept the popular labels of transsexual and transgendered for people like himself because “it is important to remember that ‘transsexual’ and ‘transgendered’ are terms that have arisen out the dominant culture’s experience with gender, and are not necessarily reflective of a wide variety of people, cultures, beliefs and practices relating to gender.” (Feinberg 1998:64)

Rather, Bowen and many other contemporary indigenous gender variable people, like same-gender loving onkwehón:we, have turned to their heritage to find an identity that fits how they see themselves and their place in the world. Like the same-gender loving onkwehón:we, gender variable people have rejected the word *berdache* as a way to describe them, finding it offensive and rooted in colonial discourse. Bowen himself states he prefers to use the traditional Sioux term *winkte* for people who mainstream society would generally describe as male-to-female transsexuals or transgenderists, and the Yuma Kwe’rhome term *kurami* for female-to-male trans people (Feinberg 1998:65). While Bowen does not use the term Two-Spirit to describe himself, stating that where he is from it has been used as a slur for people of mixed blood, and could also be translated into some of our

languages as ghost-haunted, which is an important, but separate spiritual concept, there are many onkwehón:we transpeople who do identity with the term (Feinberg 1998:65).

Ultimately the modern resurrection of the Two-Spirit concept by current same-gender loving and trans onkwehón:we is part of a much longer tradition that reaches back to the cultures that existed in Turtle Island before the arrival of european colonialism. This is because in spite of differences between what exactly each culture defined as male and female, almost all onkwehón:we cultures followed a cultural construction of gender that allowed for the existence of more than two genders, and for a range of behaviours that would be considered deviant in european societies. When europeans first arrived in Turtle Island they were unprepared for the presence of Two-Spirit people and reacted sometimes with confusion and awe, and sometimes with brutal violence. The traditional acceptance of gender variability in indigenous cultures was also assaulted by the cultural colonization of their communities through such institutions as the onkwehón:we boarding schools, which punished traditional practices and rewarded acceptance of Western ideology and norms. This eventually lead to the growth of homophobia and a general lack of acceptance of gender variable people within indigenous communities in Turtle Island. However, despite this there have been movement by onkwehón:we to reclaim the term Two-Spirit as a cultural identity separate from the predominantly settler mainstream gay and lesbian society, and that allows them to link their gender identity and their sexual orientation with their identity as onkwehón:we.

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Hearing Two-Spirits

Two-Spirit voices are integral to cultivating community resistance and decolonization

BY [CORTNEY DAKIN](#) • SEP 1, 2012 • [POLITICS](#), [SOCIETY](#), [ACTION](#)

FROM: <http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/hearing-two-spirits>



Gender fluidity has traditionally been part of Indigenous culture in every region of the continent. However, the term Two-Spirit, translated from the Ojibwe *niizhmanidoowag*, was not agreed upon until 1990 at the Intertribal First Nations/Native American gay and lesbian gathering in Winnipeg. From this, a movement of gender-variant Indigenous people emerged to honour our ancestors by reclaiming our identities.

Prior to colonization, most Two-Spirited people were respected in their communities and led dignified lives. In some nations, gender variance was understood as a gift: Two-Spirits were considered to have the power of both women and men and were often seers, leaders, healers, mediators, or medicine people.

Many tribes had specific rituals for children who acted in accordance with a gender that differed from the sex they were ascribed at birth. Ceremonies and practices were based on how different genders were manifested, not on sexual preferences. Many Indigenous languages did not even include concepts for sexual

orientation. Although there were culture-specific, Two-Spirit gender norms, variation from those norms was often appreciated.

Since European colonization, Two-Spirits have been systematically alienated from their identities. Two-Spirit practices were driven underground, and in some cases eliminated. Despite commonly being mentioned in reports made before 1850, by the mid-1800s, Two-Spirit individuals and traditions seemed to have disappeared from record. This means that before the federal government banned all Aboriginal cultural ceremonies in 1925, and even before the racist and sexist Indian Act was passed in 1876, Two-Spirit ceremonies and identities were already near extermination. Although legislation was used as a colonial tool to further prevent Indigenous peoples from practising traditional healing and spirituality, it was preceded by conversion and forced assimilation to colonial gender norms by missionaries.

Colonizers used gender identity to determine policy, refusing to acknowledge chiefs who were women or Two-Spirits and excluding them from colonial state structures, private ownership, and the wage labour force. Access to power was based on gender, and the colonial system continues to try to silence Indigenous women and those who do not conform to the gender binary.

Two-Spirits are part of a tradition that involves respect. Restoring this in our relations, and resisting colonial impositions of gender and sexuality, is difficult. To address Two-Spirits' ongoing experiences of transphobia, homophobia, and racial discrimination, it is essential that the decolonization processes of Two-Spirit youth movements undermine racism as well as heterosexism and trans-misogyny. This will not only contribute to the strength of our cultures on reserves but also create spaces that foster strong Indigenous communities in urban centres.

Indigenous peoples often experience marginalization and stigma within settler LGBTQ spaces and other urban communities where respect for Indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions is lacking. Even progressive social movements can be marked by patterns of domination, assimilation, paternalism, charity, or tokenism.

By placing resurgence at the core of our lives, rather than simply reacting to the colonial agenda, Two-Spirits disrupt the colonial landscape. The very existence of Two-Spirits is resistance, and it is further strengthened when we take care of ourselves as well as the spirits of others.

Since we owe our existence to the land, the resurgence of Indigenous thought involves spending time on the land and with Elders. To decolonize LGBTQ centres, it is necessary that the opportunity to do this and to learn original teachings is not only present in but also integral to the structure of the community. It means creating space for spiritual access and promoting informed and holistic understandings of Two-Spiritedness.

Many Indigenous communities now assume colonial notions of rigid, binary gender. With a history of ongoing displacement, it is important that Two-Spirits living on reserve do not feel forced to either give up being part of their community or give up their gender identity to be accepted in their community and included in ceremonies.

Decolonization involves reframing our concepts about Indigenous governance and working to build strong Indigenous nations that honour self-determination, gender variance, and the contributions of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and LGBTQ individuals. With the re-creation of Two-Spirit identities and reclamation of traditional roles within our respective communities, the need to withdraw from them dissolves.

In both urban and reserve communities, education, awareness, and dialogue about sexual, cultural, and gender diversity will help prevent the replication of colonial relationships with each other, and with the land. Youth from all over Turtle Island have started doing what they can with what they have to create healthy communities. They are taking the lead in educating themselves and one another about traditional and contemporary Two-Spirit roles by encouraging Two-Spirits themselves to share their experiences.

Two-Spirit youth have an important role in supporting the vision of our people to transcend beyond the gender binary that has violently divided us. We are blessed to have received this vision from our Elders and ancestors. Without the resilience of Two-Spirits before us, the knowledge they carry could not be shared.

We cannot continue to support policies and practices that perpetuate the colonial violence that is destroying the land and our future. Decolonization is vital to our well-being. When we hear the voices of our own spirits, honour Two-Spirits' gifts, and respect their identities, we may learn how to live more authentically in our ways, in balance with all our relations.

Cortney Dakin is a Two-Spirited Didikai Métis spoken word artist and community organizer in London, Ontario.

Gatekeepers Between Worlds

Malidoma Patrice Some knows firsthand how alienation feels.

Born in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), West Africa, Somé was taken from his tribe as a child and imprisoned in a Jesuit seminary for 15 years. Trained to be a Catholic priest, he nonetheless longed to return home, a journey he finally accomplished by fleeing across 125 miles of dense jungle. But his homecoming was viewed with suspicion: Having learned white ways, he was now an outsider in his own village.



Malidoma Some signs his book *Of Water and the Spirit*.

(Photo by Zu Vincent)

Acceptance came through the perilous Dagara initiation in the wilderness, a supernatural ritual that reconnected him to his ancestral past and led him on the path to becoming a shaman.

Today Somé's mission is to bring African spiritual knowledge to the world, a small slice of which he recently offered a CSU, Chico audience in a March 12 talk hosted by the Council of Arts and Letters, the A.S. Multicultural Council, the Center for Multicultural and Gender Studies, and the Department of Philosophy.

Author of several books, including his autobiography *Of Water and the Spirit*, Somé holds doctorates from both the Sorbonne and Brandeis, and his talk provided an intellectual weaving of heartfelt philosophy and articulate vision.

By addressing the esteem regarded individuals who are gay or lesbian in Dagara culture, Somé said he hoped to fire up the imagination of Western listeners. "It's in fire," he said, "where new ideas get born."

In a deeply spiritual culture where "gods and goddesses walk in the village," the Dagara not only embrace gay and lesbian diversity, he noted, but honor such individuals as "gatekeepers" between the physical world and the divine.

In Dagara cosmology, geography is not only physical, but an energetic existence encompassing other realities crucial to the spiritual health of the individual and the community, explained Somé. Entrance to these worlds is

facilitated by the gatekeeper, who is born with the ability to participate in a wider web of consciousness.

Although not all gatekeepers in the Dagara tribe are gay or lesbian, "all gays and lesbians are gatekeepers," said Somé.

"Without the gatekeeper," he added, "we're left with a gate unattended" -- a sort of spiritual clamping down. Not only is the gatekeeper then robbed of his or her identity, but the community is left without a source of spiritual solace.

Everywhere he goes, noted Somé, people are interested in the issue of belonging. "How much do I belong, and to what?" he said. This is why he emphasizes the notion that we're each born with a gift.

"Everyone comes into this world to hold onto some gate, with some role to make his or her position sacred," he said. Without it, there's no relevance. And with it, life takes on a new meaning."

Zu Vincent

MEDICINE MAKING BASICS

How to Make a Medicinal Tea

By Dana L Woodruff, community herbalist, health educator, and medicine maker. [Dandelioness Herbals](#), Montpelier, VT. © 2010

Infusions or Tisanes

Infusions or tisanes extract medicinal properties from the leaf, flower, certain seeds and a few roots that are high in volatile oils (such as valerian). Fresh herbs can be chopped, torn or bruised. Dried herbs can be broken up or rubbed between your palms. This helps to break down the plants' cell walls to release more of their medicinal properties, including the oils that give herbs their scent and taste. Place the herb(s) into a vessel such as a cup, teapot or mason jar, and then fill with hot water. Cover the container to maintain the tea's medicinal qualities that may otherwise escape with the steam.

Decoctions

Decoctions extract medicinal properties from roots, bark, medicinal mushrooms and hardy seeds. We have to work a bit harder to get to the medicines of these plant parts, by boiling and chopping/grating/grinding, too, if possible. Chop or grate fresh parts (if whole, break up or grind dried parts) into a glass, enamel, or stainless steel pot, and cover with cool water. Bring the water to a boil, and then reduce the flame and simmer for 20–45 minutes, covered. If possible, let the herb soak for a few hours or overnight, before decocting the herb in order to extract the most properties possible.

Solar Infusions

Solar infusions draw out the medicinal/energetic properties of herbs with the sun. Pour fresh water over your herbs and set out in the sun for a few hours, with or without a lid.

Lunar Infusions

Lunar infusions draw out the medicinal/energetic properties of herbs with the moon. Place herbs into a glass bowl or jar of fresh water and set out in the moonlight, uncovered.



photo by Larken Bunce

Containers

When making an infusion or decoction, choose containers (mugs, kettles, teapots, French presses) made of glass, stainless steel or enamel. Other materials (aluminum, plastic) may react with the herbs or leach harmful chemicals into your brew.

Steeping Time and Temperature

Herbal infusions can be steeped for any length of time, from just a few minutes to all night long. Some herbs, such as chamomile, become bitter if left to steep more than a few minutes. Other herbs, such as nettles and oats, become more mineral-rich (and better-tasting, I believe) the longer they steep. I prefer to steep my nutritive herbs such as oats and nettles overnight in room-temperature or hot water. It's a nice bedtime ritual to prepare the next day's blend and let it infuse as you sleep. When you wake, it's ready for you to just warm and drink.

Intention

At any point in your tea-making process you can take time to breathe, unwind and focus on the changes you'd like to welcome into your life. As the photos in *The Hidden Messages in Water* show, water physically responds to energy. The waters that we take into our bodies, swim and bathe in, and contain in our bodies can carry negative messages that we've received and replay inside ourselves, or we can infuse our teas, baths and self with new messages of gratitude, love and growth.

Dosage

Since the water has been evaporated out of dried herbs, their medicinal properties are more concentrated than fresh herbs and less is needed. The following measurements are only a guide. There are herbs that you may want to use by the handful or pinch. If in doubt, just look them up in a good herb book!

Dried herbs: 1 tablespoon per cup or 4–6 tablespoons (1/4+ cup) per quart

Fresh herbs: 2 tablespoons per cup or 8–12 tablespoons (1/2 – 3/4 cup) per quart

Chronic conditions (e.g., muscle tension): 3–4 cups daily, one cup at a time, for several weeks

Acute conditions (e.g., headache, fever): 1/4 – 1/2 cup throughout the day, up to 3–4 cups

The longer you infuse or decoct the herbs, the stronger your tea will be. You can use the same herbs more than once, especially roots and barks. Each brewing will be less potent than the last, so you can add a bit of fresh herbs with the old, if you'd like.

How to Make a Tincture

By Dana L Woodruff, community herbalist, health educator, and medicine maker. [Dandelioness Herbals](#), Montpelier, VT. © 2010

Tinctures are concentrated liquid extracts of medicinal herbs. The most common liquid (or menstrum) used to extract the medicinal properties of herbs is alcohol, but you can also use vinegar and glycerine, in combination or on their own. You can tincture plants when they are in full bloom or when the roots are ready, capturing their medicine when they are fresh and most vital, to use throughout the rest of the year. Tinctures are easy to use, especially if you're traveling, working, or sick in bed and can't make your own teas. Once in tinctured form, they are all prepared and ready to use. You don't need to heat water or carry around any fresh or dried herbs. The menstrum (alcohol, vinegar or glycerine) not only draws out the medicinal properties, it also preserves them.

You can place tinctures directly in your mouth or dilute them in water, tea or juice. Some people like to add their alcohol-based tinctures to a cup of very hot water, so that some of the alcohol is evaporated off.

There are many methods for making tinctures. You can do it by ratios or percent, using scales, measuring cups and blenders. While it's fun to experiment with different methods, the way I was taught and my favorite way is to harvest the herbs I've grown in my garden or found in fields and forests, and tincture them fresh, letting them macerate (soak) for at least one moon cycle of 28 days.

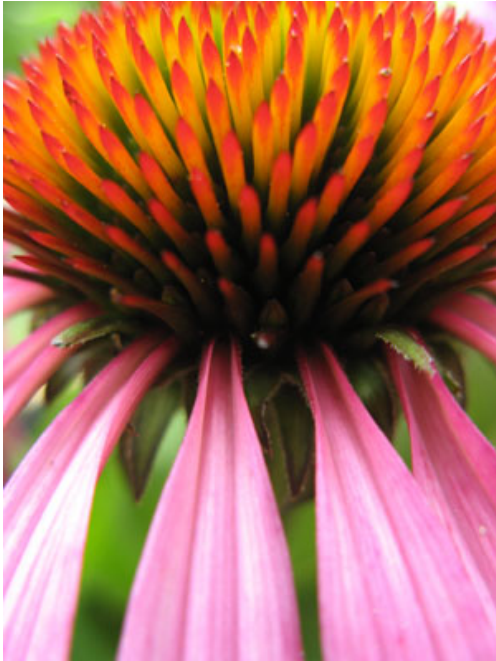


photo by LarkenBunce

Tincturing Fresh Herbs

Find the herb in a place that feels good, away from busy roads and pesticide-sprayed lawns. Harvest only what you need and give thanks to the plants, however you wish.

Chop/tear the herbs finely and fill a clean jar, leaving a couple inches at the top. Don't pack the herbs down—you want to leave space for the herb and menstrum to move around. You can also leave some of the leaves, flowers or roots whole if you like.

If you are using grain alcohol and/or glycerine and you'd like to add a percentage of water, combine your fluids in a jar, bowl or measuring cup, and shake or stir to blend them together.

Pour your menstrum over the herbs, until there is at least 1 inch of liquid over your herbs. Seal with a tight-fitting lid.

Let your tincture sit. Some say you only need 10 days to 2 weeks to fully draw the medicine into the menstrum, while others leave the tincture for 1 month or until they need it, as long as a few years (for those that are alcohol-based). I like to give the process time, at least one full month. During this time you can shake the tincture daily. The more connected you feel throughout the process (growing, harvesting, making medicine, taking the medicine), the more powerful the medicine will be.

When you're ready, strain the herbs and squeeze them to get out the most medicine you can. You can use a fine-mesh metal strainer or a funnel lined with a piece of cheesecloth or muslin. Compost the herbs, and pour your tincture into bottles. Amber-colored glass will protect your tincture from sunlight, which may cause it to lose its potency, and dropper-tops make it easy to get the right dosage. You can reuse amber glass vitamin bottles or tincture bottles. Store your tincture in a cool, dark place like a cabinet, and be sure to label it well, with the name of the herb, date and any other info you'd like to include—phase of the moon, where you harvested it from, what you saw that day.

Tincturing Dry Herbs

Check the color, scent and taste of your herb to be sure that it has maintained its vital energy.

Fill your jar 1/3 to 1/2 full with dry herb. Since dried herbs have had their moisture removed, the medicine is less dilute and more potent.

Add enough menstrum so that 2–3 inches of space remains at the top of the jar. This allows the herb room to expand as it rehydrates and space if you need to add more menstrum to keep the herb covered.

Follow nos. 5 and 6 from above.

Some folks choose to make tinctures individually and then create formulas as needed. Others make blends that are tinctured together from the beginning. There's definitely some magic/synergy that happens when herbs join and blend together. However, tincturing herbs separately is a good way to start, to get to know the herbs on their own.

Michael Moore, may he rest in peace, was all about medicine for the people. You can download his materia medica for free from [his website](#) There you'll find which herbs to tincture fresh or dried and what percent alcohol to use. If there's an herb that's new to you, that you'd like to make medicine from, it's a good practice to research it in at least 3 herb books written by trusted herbalists (see booklist at end).

Tincture Dosage

Tincture dosage depends on the herb, person and situation. In general, 1/4 – 1/2 teaspoon (15–30 drops, 1/2 – 1 dropperfull) of tincture is used 3 times daily for chronic situations. For acute conditions, you want to take smaller and/or more frequent doses, such as 1/4 teaspoon every hour.

For children, when an adult would use 1 teaspoon:

Age	Dose
6-12 months	4 drops
12-24 months	7 drops
2-3 years	10 drops
3-4 years	12 drops
4-6 years	15 drops
6-9 years	24 drops
9-12 years	30 drops

Menstrums: Alcohol

Alcohol extracts many of the plant's constituents and is rapidly absorbed into the bloodstream. Many people use vodka, brandy or gin. Divide the proof of the alcohol in half to determine the alcohol content; 100 proof alcohol is 50% alcohol (and 50% water); 80 proof is 40% alcohol (and 60% water). The alcohol extracts certain components, the water others. To preserve your tincture you need at least 25% alcohol by volume, and it will last for years. Some folks prefer using Everclear or organic grain alcohol, which are both 190 proof (95% alcohol, 5% water) then add distilled water or fresh well water to get the desired ratio. Feel free to keep it simple by using what you can get at the liquor store. (I began by using 100 proof vodka with fresh plants.) Then you can experiment from there. Just remember that you need at least 25% alcohol to preserve a tincture. If you're tincturing an herb that's resinous (e.g., myrrh) or more water-soluble (e.g., marshmallow root), check a solvent chart to find the optimum alcohol-to-water ratio.

Menstrums: Glycerine

Glycerine is sweet and soothing to our mucous membranes (such as line the throat and gut). Like alcohol, it is a natural preservative, but it does not extract as many of the herb's components. However, if you want a sweet-tasting remedy, especially for little ones, or a tincture for folks who don't want any alcohol, you can explore glycerine as a menstrum. Glycerites (glycerine-based tinctures) don't last as long as alcohol-based tinctures, so keep an eye on them. You can refrigerate them to extend their shelf life if you wish. Be sure to use 100% pure vegetable glycerine, available at herb shops, co-ops, natural food stores, and through mail-order companies such as Mountain Rose. If you choose to combine your glycerine with water, just be sure that the majority of your blend is glycerine in order for it to keep. Most people keep their glycerine ratio around 80% (adding 20% water) or use 100% glycerin for particularly juicy fresh plants.

Menstrums: Vinegar

Vinegar, like alcohol and glycerine, is a natural preservative and extracts certain properties. While it doesn't draw out medicine from plants as well as alcohol, it is very good for digestion and it can be easily incorporated into your daily routine

as a food—in soups, salads, stir-frys, on greens, or just on its own. I like to make vinegars infused with tonic herbs—herbs that are nourishing and safe to take every day. If possible, try to use organic/locally grown apple cider vinegar. The distilled white vinegar is best reserved for cleaning.

How to Make an Herb-Infused Oil

By Dana L Woodruff, community herbalist, health educator, and medicine maker. [Dandelioness Herbals](#), Montpelier, VT. © 2010

The process of making your own herb-infused oil is similar to making tea, but instead of extracting the herb's medicine into water, you're using oil. Whether you're making a medicinal oil to heal wounds, a massage oil to soothe sore muscles, or an oil to anoint yourself with after bathing, the process is all the same.

Making herb-infused oils from fresh plants

Find the herb in a place that feels good, away from busy roads and pesticide-sprayed lawns. Harvest only what you need and give thanks to the plants, however you wish. You can let the herbs wilt in a basket for a few hours or overnight first, so that some of their moisture can evaporate and they will be less likely to grow bacteria in your oil.

Place the fresh herbs in a dry, clean glass jar.

Cover your herbs with oil and use a clean knife or chopstick to release all the little air bubbles and to completely surround the herb with the oil.

Screw on the lid and place the jar in a warm space under 100° F and let infuse for an entire moon cycle (if not possible, then for at least 2 weeks). In the summer, you can keep your oil in a sunny windowsill or out in the sunshine. In the winter, you can keep your oil near the stove or heating vents. The warmth and time draw certain properties from the herb, infusing your oil with medicine. You may want to put a rag underneath the jar, as some of the oil may seep out and make a mess.

Keep an eye on the oil. If at any point moisture appears on the exposed edges of the jar, wipe it out with a piece of cloth or paper towel. Mold may begin to grow if there is too much moisture, either from the fresh plant or if your container was not fully dry. Even if mold appears, don't throw it out! Just spoon off the mold and keep an eye on the oil.

Strain the oil through a metal strainer or cloth (muslin works great).

Compost the herb and bottle the oil in a wide-mouth jar. Water and gunk may settle on the bottom of the jar after a day or two. If this happens, siphon or pour the good oil on the top into another dry, clean jar. You may have to do this a couple of times, but it's important. If you leave the gunk, the oil will go bad.

Label your oil, including the name of the herb, the date and any other details you wish to add (moon phase, where you harvested the herb, your purpose/intention for the oil), and store in a cool, dark place. It should keep for many months—up to a year. You can add vitamin E or essential oils such as lavender or rosemary to lengthen the oil's shelf life—this is a good idea if you're giving oil as a gift that may not be used right away.

Making herb-infused oils from dry plants

Choose the dry herb you'd like to use. You can use herbs that you dried yourself or buy them at a co-op, natural food store or by mail order. When buying herbs, crush the herb between your fingers, smell it, and notice the color and appearance. Every herb is different, but in general, it should maintain its scent and have some of its color left. If you are unsure whether it still possesses its vital energy, move on and find another herb that clearly does.

Place the dried herbs in a dry, clean glass jar. As dried herbs are more concentrated, you only need to use about 1/2 the amount that you'd use fresh.

Fill the jar halfway.

Follow the instructions above. As long as you make sure your jar is dry, you should have no trouble with mold.

The double boiler method

If you don't have the time to let the oil draw out the herb's medicine slowly, you can use this method:

Place the herbs and oil together in a double boiler. If you don't have a double boiler, you can rig one up by resting a metal bowl over a pot of water.

Slowly warm the herbs at the lowest temperature for at least 30–60 minutes. Check often to make sure that the oil is not too hot. You don't want to cook your herbs in the oil, just warm them. The longer you're able to warm the oil at a low temperature, the stronger medicine your oil will be.

Let the oil cool and then strain it through a cloth and label, as described above.

Choosing your oil

For medicinal oils, the most commonly used oil is olive oil, which lasts longer and is less expensive than most other oils. Extra virgin cold-pressed is best. Grapeseed oil is also commonly used and is more lightweight than olive oil. Sesame oil is commonly used in Ayurvedic medicine for its warming and medicinal properties, both on the hair and skin. Jojoba oil is the closest to our body's own natural oil. Almond oil is good for dry, mature and sensitive skin.

Some possibilities for infused oils

Wound-healing oil with herbs such as calendula blossoms, yarrow leaf and flower, St. John's wort blossom, and plantain leaf.

Sore muscle soothing oil with St. John's wort and ginger oils, and a touch of cayenne to increase circulation.

Breast massage oil with calendula, dandelion blossom, evergreen needles, plantain leaf, and red clover blossom.

Energetic protection anointing oil with yarrow leaf and flower or St. John's wort blossom.

Dreamtime oil with mugwort, lavender, and chamomile.

You can massage in your oil before or after bathing, or add a bit directly to the water. Massaging in your oil before bathing is not a common practice in this country, but the warmth of the bath or shower helps the oil to penetrate deeper into our bodies and the massage promotes circulation, which is very welcome during our cold winter months! Remember to take care when your bath is finished, as the floor may be slippery. Just squirt a bit of castile soap on the bathtub/shower floor, rub it down and rinse.

How to Make Herbal Salves & Balms

By Dana L Woodruff, community herbalist, health educator, and medicine maker. [Dandelioness Herbs](#), Montpelier, VT. © 2010

A salve is a blend of oil, herbs and wax, used externally to soothe and protect the skin. Depending on the herbs you choose, you can make a heal-all salve for cuts, dry skin, burns, stings and scrapes, or you can make salves for specific ailments such as bites, diaper rash and fungus. There are many methods for making herbal salves. Here is one:

Warm 1 cup of herb-infused oil in a double boiler or a pan over very low heat. Add 4 tablespoons of grated or chopped beeswax, stir and let the wax slowly melt into the oil. Dip a spoon into the mixture and blow on it until it's solid, or put in the freezer for a few minutes to cool quicker. If the salve is too hard, add more oil. If it's too soft, add more beeswax. Once you get it to the consistency you're seeking, remove from heat and pour it into dry, clean containers right away. If you wait too long, the salve will begin to harden in the pot. Either just before or just after you pour the salve into containers, you can mix in extra ingredients such as vitamin E oil or essential oils.

Each essential oil (EO) is different, and each person is more or less sensitive to them than the next, but in general you can add 1–2 drops of EO per lip balm tube and 2–3 drops EO per ounce. If you choose to add them before pouring, give the liquid a stir so that the EO blends together with the other ingredients. Let the salves harden slowly, allowing them to cool completely before moving them. Be sure to have plenty of extra jars because when the oil and wax warm and blend all together a magic alchemical reaction always seems to happen, somehow making more salve appear.

Most salves keep for about a year. They last longer if kept in a cool, dark place, rather than letting them melt and re-melt in a hot car, for example. You can use an array of herbs, oils, waxes and other ingredients. Lip balms are made as above, but usually with more beeswax, for a harder consistency.

Some possibilities for salves and balms

- Heal-all salve with calendula blossoms, plantain leaf, and St. John's wort flowers.

- Antifungal salve with calendula blossoms and black walnut hull oils, and tea tree essential oil.
- Decongestant salve with essential oils of peppermint, eucalyptus, thyme, rosemary and/or pine.
- Mint chocolate lip balm with cocoa butter and essential oil of peppermint.
- Lip gloss with oil infused with alkanet root, which gives a red color.

Medicinal Uses of Culinary Herbs

by Sandra Lory, Herbalist and Food Educator, [Mandala Botanicals](#), Barre VT. © 2009

Culinary herbs are familiar and potent ingredients; their smell and tastes are distinct. They have strong qualities that impart flavor and aroma, and natural chemical constituents that act on the digestive system. It's no wonder that for centuries people have used many herbs interchangeably as seasonings and, when needed, prepared them specifically as medicine.

All of the following herbs can be grown successfully in the northern climate, except for cinnamon, cardamom and ginger. You can also buy these medicines at your local health-food store in the bulk section, which is more cost-effective than going to a supermarket, and a wiser quality choice. Many commercial herbs are irradiated, harvested at the wrong time of year, dried in ways that kill the life force (and therefore the medicine), or sprayed with chemicals during cultivation.

Ask your local food co-op or health-food store to carry organic or biodynamic herbs from good sources, especially local ones as these will be the most potent and effective.

Herbs are listed by plant family to highlight the correlations of properties among family members, and to acknowledge their relationships as part of an interwoven system.

Apiaceae (Umbelliferae)

Cultivated family members — carrots, celery, parsnip

Wild family member — wild carrot (Queen Anne's lace)

(2 toxic wild members: water hemlock and poison hemlock)

PARSLEY leaf and root (*Petroselinum crispum*) || biennial/perennial

Rich source of vitamin C. Carminative — treats flatulence and colic.

Emmenagogue — stimulates the menses; do not use in large amounts if pregnant.

Leaves or root can be eaten. Diuretic — promotes excretion of excess water from the body; used for edema, fluid retention, frequent urination, rheumatic complaints, intestinal worms. Chewing fresh leaves freshens the breath. The Maya consider fresh parsley juice a liver cleanser. Can be grown easily on a windowsill, and pinched for cooking as needed.

CORIANDER seed (*Coriandrum sativum*) || annual

This is the seed of the cilantro herb.

A warming carminative that relieves flatulence, indigestion, colic. To stimulate the digestive juices and the appetite, drink tea of the seeds before meals. To prepare a "gripe water" remedy for children's diarrhea, steep a spoonful of seeds in a cup of boiled water for 10–15 minutes, and drink warm. Chew seeds to eliminate bad breath. Ground seeds also provide odor relief. Coriander leaves are called cilantro, an important herb to eat for detoxing heavy metals from the body. Both seeds and leaves can be infused for urinary tract infections.

CUMIN seed (*Cuminum cyminum*) || long-season annual

Relieves gas and bloating in the digestive tract; stimulates digestion. Helpful remedy for nausea or morning sickness. An infusion before meals is warming to the digestion. Antimicrobial properties that help treat tooth decay when used in tooth powders and mouth rinses. Treats bronchial/lung inflammation and respiratory problems. Effective pain reliever when seeds are crushed and mixed with hot water to form a paste, then used as a poultice over muscles. Mixed with a little fresh onion juice, apply to stings and swellings to reduce pain by promoting blood circulation and drawing out toxins. Also promotes lactation.

FENNEL seed (*Foeniculum vulgare*) || annual

The bulb is also delicious, although milder in medicinal action.

Fennel has the classic licorice candy flavor, used like anise as a flavoring. (Glycyrrhizaglabra root is true licorice.) Promotes lactation during nursing. Mothers and small children can drink the seed tea to relieve colic. Chewing the seeds after meals helps settle the stomach and ease digestion. Indian restaurants always provide fennel and other carminative seeds to chew. Very effective treatment for bloating, flatulence, bad breath. Calms coughs and bronchitis; useful in homemade cough syrups for its flavor and medicinal properties. Makes a good tooth paste/powder herb. Seeds may be infused into muscle/joint rubbing oils for pain relief.

DILL seed (*Anethum graveolens*) || annual

The green leaves are also used, and milder in medicinal properties.

A galactagogue (think Milky Way galaxy) that increases flow of mother's milk. Alleviates nervous system stress from disturbed sleep and insomnia. In parts of

Asia, used to ease childbirth. Antispasmodic (eases cramps and spasms in the body), carminative (rich in volatile oils that stimulate digestion), and expectorant (removes excess mucus from respiratory system). Remedy for flatulence and colic, especially in children. Take one cup of tea before meals. Chew seeds for bad breath. Relieves nausea and vomiting. Relieves painful periods and regulates menstruation. The leaves cooked with fish helps brain function.

Lamiaceae (Mint family)

One of the largest plant families in the world

THYME leaves (*Thymus vulgaris*) || perennial

Strong antiseptic. External wash from tea for infected wounds. Internal tea or tincture for respiratory or digestive infection. Gargle for laryngitis, tonsillitis, sore throats, and irritable coughs, especially accompanied by nervousness or anxiety. Expectorant (helps expel mucus from respiratory system) and antispasmodic. Helpful for bronchitis, whooping cough, and asthma. Gentle astringent for children's diarrhea and bedwetting. Antiseptic and diuretic. Helps body fight against viral, bacterial, fungal, gastro-intestinal, and genito-urinary system infections. Helps re-establish a healthy bacterial population if on antibiotics or experiencing excess candida. Add a handful to bath water to warm and exhilarate the body. Protects against degenerative problems.

OREGANO leaves (*Origanum vulgare*) || perennial

Antifungal and antibiotic. Treats colds and flu. Tea reduces fever by promoting sweating (diaphoretic), breaks up bronchitis, and treats inflammations of the mouth and throat. It can be used externally as a wound wash. Bruises can be soaked with the cool tea. Tea is an excellent remedy for coughs and menstrual cramps. Excellent in vaginal steam baths to bring circulation and cleansing to uterus. Treats painful joints.

SAGE leaves (*Salvia officinalis*) || tender perennial

My favorite use is to steep a pinch of sage and sea salt in a cup of hot water and gargle several times to treat strep and sore throat. Its volatile oils soothe the mucous membranes and reduce inflammation while being highly antiseptic, antibacterial and antifungal. Specific for respiratory infections. Cool tea is a great

mouthwash for inflamed and bleeding gums, tongue, or mouth ulcers. Reduces sweating (helpful with hot flashes) and reduces breast milk production. Stimulates the uterine muscles so avoid if pregnant (culinary doses are fine). Can aid childbirth and help expel the placenta. A warm compress made from tea and placed over swollen area helps heal external wounds. Cleansing and diuretic properties are helpful for toxic conditions, arthritis, and gout. Often used in cooking heavy foods to aid their digestion. Promotes calmness of the central nervous system, calms the heart and brings mental clarity. Strong antioxidant. Useful externally for inflammation and painful joints.

ROSEMARY leaves and twigs (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) || tender perennial/bring inside for winter

Contains antiseptic, antibacterial, and antifungal volatile oils, thereby enhancing the immune system. Bundled, brewed, or burned as incense for protection against disease and negative energies. A circulatory and nervine stimulant, the smell increases concentration and strengthens the senses. Tones and calms digestion as well as mental tension. Gives headache relief by stimulating blood flow to the head. Catalyzes movement during stagnancy or sluggishness, or depressed emotional states (can use with tulsi, lavender, skullcap, lemon balm or milky oat tops). Tea can be used as a hair rinse to stimulate hair follicles. Externally provides nerve or muscle-pain relief. A powerful antioxidant. Has an astringent and relaxant effect on uterus, relieves cramps, and helps regulate periods. The essential oil is a bug repellent and a treatment for scabies and lice.

BASIL leaves (*Ocimum basilicum*) || annual

Used as an essential oil, has sweet and pungent antibacterial, antifungal, anti-candida properties; a warming treatment for cramps, colds, flu, fevers. Has an affinity for the nervous system, strengthening, releasing tension and uplifting. Improves memory, concentration, and clarity. Aid to digestion and travel sickness. Clears phlegm from the nose and chest, and cleanses internal infections. The boiled herb or seed is a migraine remedy. A cool tea rinse prevents infections on wounds and treats infected wounds. Makes a delicious PMS tea. Put a handful of basil leaves in your bath (with marigold flowers if you have them) to treat fever. Mix 3 each marigold, rue, and basil sprigs in a basin of warm water, leave in the sunlight then strain and flick around corners of the house for a cleansing — the air will feel light and peaceful. Excellent herb for vaginal steam baths (use with herbs

such as oregano, chamomile, calendula, rosemary, but only when not menstruating).

MINT leaves (*Menthapiperita* or *spicata*) || spreading perennial

Both cooling and warming. Has a refreshing taste, and a cooling effect in the respiratory tract that can be felt on the skin. Hot peppermint tea is a warming remedy for winter ailments – it improves circulation induces heat. Helps disperse blood and tonify the heart. Excellent after dinner tea, mixed with something spicy like ginger (to treat acid reflux choose a bitter warming carminative instead). Relieves stomach and intestinal discomfort (lower digestive processes). Treats nausea, and lower digestive/bowel complaints. Helpful tea and as face steam for colds and sinus congestion. A nervine that eases anxiety and tension. Pain relief associated with menstrual cramps and general aches and pains. Good tea for children to settle their stomach; nice in summertime ice cubes with edible flowers. Excellent antiseptic flavoring for cough, cold, indigestion, and throat remedies.

Zingiberaceae (Ginger family, found in tropics)

Turmeric (*Curcuma domestica/longa*) is also in the ginger family

GINGER rhizome (*Zingiber officinale*) || tropical perennial

Very spicy circulatory stimulant. Promotes blood movement in the peripheries. Has blood-thinning properties and inhibits blood-clotting. Grate and apply as a warm compress over sprains to reduce inflammation, or on swollen glands to drain lymph. Breaks congestion and fever during colds and flu. Expectorant action in the lungs: relieves coughs and expels phlegm. As a tea or cooked into food, helps prevent winter chills. To sweat out a fever or pass a cold, simmer 2–3 inches ginger root in 2 quarts water for 15 minutes, add juice of one lemon, a spoonful of raw honey, and pinch of cayenne pepper; drink immediately. An aphrodisiac. Very effective motion-sickness remedy. Useful for colic, gas, indigestion. Gargle or tea for sore throats. An infused oil of grated ginger (optional pinch of cayenne pepper; avoid contact with eyes/mucous membranes) can be used to massage over sore muscles. Caution to pregnant women: very stimulating to blood flow and core of the body.

CARDAMOM dried seed pod (*Elettaria cardamomum*) || tropical perennial

Valuable and difficult-to-grow herb. Some species are cultivated in hot climates in wet areas where poisonous water snakes and insects comprise a part of the micro-ecosystem. The precious seed pods grow close to the ground and are difficult to gather. Warming, calming digestive bitter. Anti-mucus agent helpful in lung tonics. Added to cooked fruit and desserts it helps increase digestion and absorption, and reduce mucous formation. Eases gluten intolerance when sprinkled into baked goods, grains, and cereals. Stimulates the flow of saliva and the appetite. Relieves griping pains. A valued aphrodisiac; exquisite with roses and honey.

Liliaceae (Lily family)

Same family as chives, scallions, shallots, leeks, onions

GARLIC bulb (*Allium sativum*) || biennial, flowers the 2nd year

Easy to grow; needs an entire year to harvest. Plant individual cloves by mid-October, one hand-width apart; harvest when leaf stalks begin to turn brown the next July or August. Can plant the bulbules (small seeds from the matured flower top) also; these take two seasons to mature. Antiviral, antiseptic, ant-parasite, antispasmodic, immune-enhancing, blood-vessel strengthening, antioxidant. It is absorbed into bloodstream from digestive tract, and excreted via the lungs, bowels, skin, and urinary system, disinfecting them all. High doses of raw, high-quality garlic (capsules) help treat pneumonia. For bronchitis: boil garlic cloves and skins with oregano leaves, steep until drinkable, and drink every 2 hours (same brew can be used as a brief face steam for 5 minutes). Toenail fungus: rub with raw cloves 2–3 times daily, from new moon to new moon. Chopped garlic in raw honey with a squeeze of fresh lemon is a potent antibiotic against flu and colds (the honey also helps prevent the "burn" of raw garlic in the stomach). Ear infections: warm, crushed garlic infused into olive oil (strain before using) can be applied a few drops at once into ear, followed by a massage around neck and ears 3 times per day. Garlic in any form keeps away energy vampires of all sorts.

Solanaceae (Nightshade family)

Wild members — bittersweet nightshade, datura, wild tomato

CAYENNE PEPPER fruit (*Capsicum frutescens/baccatum*) || annual

It's hot to the tongue but cools the body post-digestion. Powerful stimulant rich in vitamin C. Circulates chi and blood. The burning sensation on the tongue sends messages to the brain to secrete endorphins, natural opiates that block pain and induce a feeling of well-being. First aid: stops bleeding if applied, powdered, directly onto cut. Warms the core, aids digestion, speeds metabolism, decongests the lungs. Avoid if you are prone to overheating or stomach acidity. Externally can be used in olive oil infused with ginger or Saint John's wort flowers for joint and nerve pain. Blocks irritation and bronchiole constriction caused by cigarette smoke and other airborne irritants. Instant immune soup paste: blend few pinches of cayenne powder and turmeric with finely chopped garlic and ginger, mix into equal parts miso, tahini, and honey (or to taste); keep on hand in fridge

Lauraceae (Laurel family)

CINNAMON bark (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*) || deciduous tropical tree

Mild astringent, warming digestive, stimulant, germicide. Shrinks mucous membranes; helpful internally to check secretions in diarrhea, sore throat, peptic ulcers, and hemorrhage. Caution if you have a bleeding disorder. Good in combination with other herbs. Used in ancient Egyptian embalming blends. Boil and steep with organic roses to stop bleeding or diarrhea. Eases vomiting and flatulence. Temporarily accelerates physiological activity by stimulating all the vital functions of the body. Inhibits bacterial growth and helps normalize blood sugar levels. Used in desserts, helps the body balance the effects of sugar.

References: The New Holistic Herbal by David Hoffman, Planetary Herbology by Michael Tierra, The Family Herbal by Rosemary Gladstar, Rainforest Home Remedies by Rosita Arvigo and Nadine Epstein, The Joy of Cooking by Irma and Marion Rombauer, The Ayurvedic Cookbook by Amadea Morningstar, Chinese System of Food Cures by Henry C. Lu., The Complete Floral Healer by Anne McIntyre, Herbal Antibiotics by Stephen Buhner

FLOWER ESSENCES

Flower Essences

Writings from blogs by Atava Garcia Swiecicki, from Ancestral Apothecary

<http://www.ancestralapothecary.com/atava.php>

Flower Healing Past and Present

May 15th, 2008 by atava



This is a good time of year to learn about the healing power of flowers. Flowers have been and continue to be a significant medicine for all traditional peoples. Flowers are used for spiritual cleansing, for blessings, for celebration, and for mourning. Flowers are an important part of ceremonies all throughout the cycle of life, from birth to death.

In modern times, flowers have been incorporated into a system of healing called flower essence therapy. Flower essences are a subtle, yet profound system of healing. As a form of vibrational healing, flower essences do not work directly on the physical body or issues of physical disharmony. Instead, they work on our energetic or etheric bodies. As the flower essences help shift our energy fields, they reach the emotional and spiritual roots of physical illness. In this way, flower essences can be a catalyst for deep healing within our mind, body and spirit.

Flower Healing Part 2

May 15th, 2008 by atava

In March I made a journey to the Anza Borrego Desert, outside of San Diego. The desert wildflowers were in full bloom. I was joyful to be around the plants of my desert dwelling ancestors. Here is one of the important flowering plants that I encountered:



Chaparral is one of the oldest living plants on Mother Earth. Some chaparral plants living in the California desert are over 9,000 years old. Chaparral, which is also called Greasewood, was considered a panacea for the native people that lived around it. As an herb, chaparral is powerfully cleansing to the body and it has been used for many illnesses, including cancer.



As a flower essence, chaparral is a powerful emotional cleanser. It helps us to release old, toxic emotions that we have stored deep in our body. Once, when I was sitting in meditation with a

chaparral plant, she showed me how my emotions vibrated in the cells of my body. Later, when I took the flower essence, I went through a healing phase where for many days I released old feelings of sadness and anger. Chaparral also helps to connect us to our own ancestors. In this way, it helps to root ourselves into our own genealogy. Connection to ancestors has always been an integral part of indigenous cultures. Many modern people suffer from disconnection to their ancestors. This creates many other issues, including loneliness and a sense of not belonging. If you wish to connect to your ancestors, begin by making a prayer and offering to let them know your request. Then take the flower essence of chaparral, or take a small piece of the plant and put in on your altar or carry it on your body.

Making Flower Essences

August 10th, 2009 by atava

Flower essences are powerful remedies for our mind, body and spirit. They are also very easy to make. The most common way of making flower essences is called the Sun Method.



Flower Essence Making, The Sun Method

1. The first and most important step in flower essence making is to find the perfect, vital, blooming flowers. Ideally you are in a place in nature or in your back yard away from cars, people, or other energetic distractions.
2. Use a clear, clean glass bowl or goblet. I have a few bowls that I only use for flower essence making.
3. To energetically clean you goblet, rinse it with cold water or smudge it with sage.
4. Fill the bowl with the purest water available.
5. Find the flowers you are going to harvest for the essence. Make an offering and ask permission to pick them. An offering can be a song, a prayer, some tobacco, some candy (flower fairies love candy!), or whatever feels connected to your heart.
6. Pick several blossoms without touching them and drop them into the bowl of water. I like to use two small stones or sticks to grab and cut the

flower blossom. (It helps to have two people for this step; one to pick and one to hold the bowl.)



Desert Lily Flower Essence

7. Some say to completely cover the surface of the water with the flowers. I say this depends on the flower. Be mindful if the plant is rare, endangered, if it only has a few blossoms, or there are only a few plants in the stand. Sometimes all you need is one blossom. Sometimes it is better to not pick at all, but to simply lean the flower down into the water while still keeping it on the plant.

8. Keep the flower water in as close to full sun as possible for at least three hours.

9. After three hours, check the flowers to see if they look wilted and “cooked.” This means that their vital essence has been transferred into the water and it is ready to be finished.

10. Strain out the flowers (and any insects that may have jumped into the water) and pour the water into an amber glass jar covering with an equal amount of brandy. This flower water and brandy mixture is called the mother essence.

11. Label your flower essence immediately. Include the name of the flower, location of harvest and date. I also like to include relevant astrological information, like “Sun in Leo” or “Summer Solstice.” Also note the potency of the essence: a mother essence, stock or dosage bottle.

12. Variations: You can make flower essences by the light of the full moon.

Flower Essence Therapy

August 20th, 2009 by atava

By Atava Garcia Swiecicki, MA, Registered Herbalist (American Herbalist Guild) and Flower Essence Practitioner in the San Francisco Bay Area.

“If we are peaceful, if we are happy, we can blossom like a flower, and everyone in our family, our entire society, will benefit from our peace.”

Thich Nhat Hahn



What are Flower Essences?

Flower essences are the energetic, or vibrational imprint of a plant. Flower essences contain the essence, spirit or intelligence of a plant. Each essence contains the unique life force and healing properties of each particular flower from which it is made.

How are Flower Essences made?

Flower essences are made with the blossoms of a flower infused into water in full sunlight. In making a flower essence we are careful not to harm the plant. Only a few blossoms are needed. Sometimes, with rare or endangered flowers, we need not even pick any- instead, we gently lean the flower into the water. The original flower water is called the mother essence. From the mother essence, flower essences are diluted in a way similar to homeopathy, and then preserved with brandy.



How do flower essences work?

Flower essences help to shift our consciousness. Flower essences help awaken our awareness to our patterns of imbalance, and provide us with the energetic support to make positive changes. They bless us with the power of Nature. Cynthia Athena Kemp Scherer of [Desert Alchemy](#) writes that flower essences are “nature’s tuning forks. As we use the essence we begin to resonate in harmony with the qualities of the flower, and limitations and disharmonies begin to change.”

Flower essences stimulate our own innate wise woman ability to heal ourselves. [Dr. Edward Bach](#), the pioneer of flower essence therapy writes:

“They cure, not by attacking the disease but by flooding our bodies with the beautiful vibrations of our Higher Nature, in the presence of which, disease melts away as snow in the sunshine.”

How can I be helped with Flower Essences?

Flower essences are a subtle, yet profound system of healing. They help harmonize our mental, emotional, and spiritual bodies. In this way, flower essences address the root of many of our healing projects. Flower essences work with a broad range of important healing issues, including depression, creativity, sexuality, addiction/recovery, old traumas, stress, relationships, spirituality, and work.

As a form of vibrational healing, flower essences do not work directly on the physical body or issues of physical disharmony. Instead, they work on our energetic or etheric bodies. As the flower essences help shift our energy fields, they reach the emotional and spiritual roots of physical illness. In this way, flower essences can be a catalyst for deep healing within our mind, body and spirit.

Administering Flower Essences

August 24th, 2009 by atava

How do I use Flower Essences?

The most common way to take flower essences is directly from a dosage bottle. A common dosage is to take 4 drops 4 times/day. We can take a single flower essence at once, or in combination with other flower essences or herbs.

Another way to use flower essences is to add seven drops into a mister bottle. In this way, we can mist our home or office environment with our flower essences. By adding essential oils to the mister bottles we enhance our flower essences with the benefits of aromatherapy.



A dropperful of flower essences can be added to baths.

For topical use, add 4-7 drops of flower essences to your favorite cream, lotion, or massage oil. You can also apply the essences directly to the skin.

Flower essences are safe and effective for adults, children, infants, animals and plants. Animals and children are especially sensitive to the healing energies of flower essences. For children, add 1-4 drops of flower essences to juice or water. For animals, add 1-4 drops to their food or drinking water. Essences can also be applied topically to skin or fur. For plants, add flower essences to watering can. Diseased or injured plants, as well as transplants all benefit from Rescue Remedy. Mist with flower essences in the home environment of the animal, child or plant.

SHAKE WELL! Always shake your flower essences before taking. Shaking helps activate the energy of the flower essence. As I like to say, shaking the

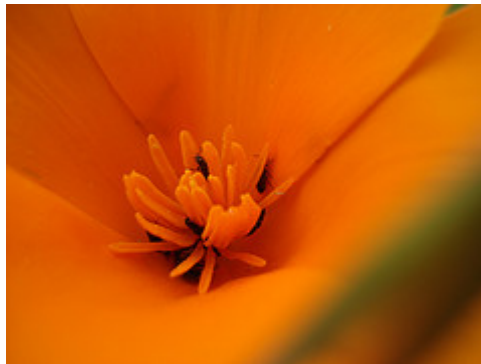
dosage bottle wakes up the sleeping flower fairies and lets them know it's time for work.

Flower Essences for Healing, Recovery & the 12 Steps

August 25th, 2009 by atava in [Flower essences](#), [Healing](#)

This post is based on a workshop I taught on Flower Essences for Recovery at the Mandana House in Oakland, CA.

Flower Essences are a form of vibrational or energetic medicine. They address the emotional, mental, and spiritual components of wellness. By connecting the individual to the spirit of Nature, flower essences help awaken the beneficial and healing qualities within us. Flower essence remedies are safe and effective for adults, children, the elderly, animals and plants.



The following is a list of flower essences that I have found most useful in my practice. I have tried to include essences that are most applicable to recovery and the 12 Steps.

Rescue Remedy/ Five Flower Formula

Crisis: Desert Emergency Formula- Encourage calmness and stability in any time of shock, trauma, stress, or injury. Great for all levels of recovery, whenever in place of extreme stress, transition, or crisis.

Cherry Plum- For fear of nervous breakdown, or losing control of the mind. Helps one to connect and surrender to their Higher Self/Higher Power. (To “Let Go and Let God”.)

Sweet Chestnut- For the “dark night of the soul.” Helps cultivate courage, as well as and faith and trust in a Higher Power/Goddess/God/Spirit World. Indicated when one has reached “rock bottom” in their addiction.

Self-Heal- To connect to one’s innate ability to heal. Helps cultivate a strong sense of wellness. For taking responsibility for one’s healing.

Sacred Datura- For disintegration of a known form of reality. Feeling as if your being/identity is dissolving. To help see beyond one’s present view of reality to a much more expanded state.



Walnut- The “link breaker.” Freedom from influences that are no longer useful. Helpful in making healthy transitions.

Angelica- For connecting with one’s Higher Power/Higher Self, as well as benevolent angels and spirit guides in one’s life.

Centaury- For an unhealthy need to serve or please others, a remedy for those working with co-dependence.

Sticky Monkeyflower- For deep fear of intimacy and sexuality, which can manifest as either sexual addiction or anorexia. Helps build balanced integration of human warmth and sexual intimacy.

California Poppy- For those who are attracted to the glamour of spiritual highs that come from outside of the Self. For addiction to narcotic and hallucinogenic drugs, materialism, and fame. For cultivating a true spirituality centered in one’s heart.

Black-eyed Susan- For penetrating insight into the painful and buried aspects of personality. Cultivates ability to consciously acknowledge all aspects of self, including the “shadow”.

Holly- Remedy for a closed heart. For jealousy, suspicion, anger. Opens the heart, develops compassion.

Willow- For feeling resentful, bitter, like one is a victim. Encourages acceptance and taking personal responsibility for one's life.

Pine- For guilt and self-blame. Promotes self-acceptance and forgiveness.

Mimulus- For known fears, and shyness. Helps with courage and confidence.

Mariposa Lily- For healing emotional wounds around childhood, especially issues around mother and mothering.



Sunflower- For working on issues around father/masculine/yang energy, that can manifest as low self-esteem, or egomania. Particularly useful for helping women to claim their power and take up more space.

Saguaro Cactus- For feeling powerless, and not trusting one's inner wisdom. Helps us access our deepest inner wisdom. The "true father" remedy that helps us to empower ourselves.

Scarlet Monkeyflower- For repression and fear of intense emotions, such as rage and powerlessness.

Buttercup- For low self-esteem issues. To cultivate self-love, and a knowing of one's inner beauty.

Wild Oat- For finding one's true calling and vocation. For developing a life and work that is a true expression of one's inner values.

California Wild Rose- A remedy for apathy. For enthusiastic love for and service to All Our Relations.

Iris- For creativity and divine inspiration. A remedy for feeling dull and uninspired.

Flower Essences and Same-Sex Relationships by John R. Stowe



Flower Essences and Same-Sex Relationships

<http://www.essences.com/vibration/feb02/samesexrelationships.html>

Our first question is, "Are same-sex relationships different from other relationships?" At first glance, it's easy to minimize the differences, because the similarities are so great. Qualities such as clear communication, honesty, trust, support, mutual respect, and adequate personal space are fundamental parts of every relationship. Let's look more deeply, then, and see how the challenges and opportunities facing individuals in same-sex relationships might be unique and different. Some of these are inherent in the nature of the relationship itself, while others derive from the societal context in which it takes place.

First, our society offers virtually no acceptable model for healthy, same-sex relationships. Until very recently, mainstream society didn't acknowledge that such relationships could even exist, much less that they could be happy and fulfilling. This lack of viable models has forced same-sex partners to come up with their own forms of relating.



In one sense, this is a blessing because it forces them to experiment with what works and to construct relationships based on personal needs and desires. Instead of striving to live up to some idealized image of how they "should" be, same-sex partners often create forms that are new, creative, and highly innovative. In fact, many characteristics that mark successful same-sex relationships -- such as freedom from rigid gender-based roles and a more equal sharing of responsibilities -- have actually filtered back into society at large where they've helped to enrich and transform the whole concept of relationship. At the same time, there are challenges.

One challenge, especially for those who are young or new to relationship, is that "starting from scratch" works best when those involved already have a strong understanding of their own needs and desires. This degree of self-awareness usually comes only with time and experience -- and the process of getting there often demands a great deal of patience, flexibility, and self-examination. There are some essences that help. (All the listed essences, except where noted, are Earthfriends')

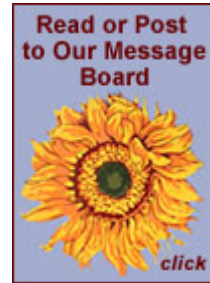
Mistflower encourages us to be gentle and accepting of ourselves and our partners, to speak our own truths, and to allow space for making mistakes and learning from them. It often helps couples who have become "stuck" on a particular incident to forgive, forget, and move on.

Lenten Rose helps people to discard outdated concepts or behaviors, to remain flexible, and to embrace new ways of being. It helped Bill and George to recognize that the "husband/wife" roles they'd accepted as "what couples are supposed to look like" didn't really work for them at all. Empress Tree encourages us to approach any situation or relationship with creativity and inspiration. (These examples involve the Southeastern flower remedies with which I'm most familiar. I encourage you to think about how to address the same issues with the remedy repertoires most familiar to you.)



Another challenge is homophobia, both internalized and in the world. Growing up in a society that either condemns or just barely tolerates same-sex love inevitably leaves scars. Even in the most well-adjusted couples, these old wounds can show up during times of crisis as intense self-doubt, fear, and feelings of inadequacy or futility. These times call for strong medicine. Fernleaf Yarrow is one of the most powerful supporters of self-esteem and self-confidence. It's an excellent antidote to thoughts like, "They were right--we can't be happy together," or, "I'll never get what I want. I don't deserve it." Quince helps us to release this old baggage with laughter, lightness, and humor. It defangs the old serpents of self-doubt and over-defensiveness and reminds us that we can meet life's inevitable challenges with movement and joy.

Sometimes internalized homophobia leads to negative coping mechanisms including substance abuse or a distrust of one's most basic desires to love and be loved. Pokeweed can help people who make the choice to overcome addictions or who feel ready to move beyond old feelings of victimization. It helps them conquer self-deception, defensive jealousy, or other negative patterns that can tear a relationship apart. Pink Dogwood adds a level of calm and centering that facilitates emotional healing from past or present wounding. Many other flower essences are useful for dealing with negative wound-induced behaviors. (The Flower Essence Society provides Chestnut Bud, Pink Monkeyflower, Self Heal, and many more.) When partners take flower essences together as a way to focus their intention and commitment on a specific challenge, the healing is multiplied considerably.



No relationship takes place in a vacuum. Same-sex couples live in the world and interact each day with the people around them. Most of the time, the interactions are positive, yet even today, even in the biggest, most liberal cities, every same-sex relationship bears an added burden of homophobia. This burden might include the lack of basic legal protections that heterosexuals take for granted like employment security and hospital visitation or inheritance rights. It might include the fact that even the smallest public sharing of affection involves checking to see how people around you will react. Even holding hands or exchanging a kiss in the wrong circumstances carries the potential for public censure or even violence. Though the risks might seem minimal to some, they still add a level of background stress that tends to intensify other relationship challenges.



Flower essences can help. Mullein (shown here on the border) encourages individuals and couples to stand tall on their own terms and to take steps that nurture their individuality and strength. Eastern Red Cedar fosters strong positive thought, helping partners to support each other in the face of adversity or challenge. Yarrow adds a protective, vitalizing tone that helps counteract subtle



or overt negativity. Hardy Orange encourages the healthy boundaries and appropriate defenses needed to create safe personal space.

Finally, while traditional heterosexual relationships are often built on the premise that two "opposites" come together to "complete" each other, healthy same-sex relationships are enriched by an energetic mirroring in which partners reflect and support the fullness of each other's gifts and talents.

To enhance this process, Live Oak flower essence encourages individuals to explore aspects of themselves brought into focus by their partners-- such as Patricia's appreciation for the world of dance that was awakened by her lover Sarah -- and to bring into expression the full measure of his or her creativity. Southern Magnolia promotes clarity and perspective for partners working to elucidate the dreams they share. It helps them to choose goals, align their desires, and create a path in life that is mutually satisfying and fulfilling.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John R. Stowe creates [EarthFriends Flower Essences](#) and has worked to share their healing since 1984. He is author of *Gay Spirit Warrior: an Empowerment Journey for Men Who Love Men* (Findhorn Press, 1999, order it [here](#)) and *Earth Spirit Warrior: a Nature-Based Guide to Authentic Living* ([Findhorn Press](#), Spring, 2002). He maintains a practice in body-centered therapy in Decatur, GA, where he lives with his partner of 18 years

**RADICAL
BROWN
HEALTH
&
HEALING**

Black Berets, White Coats : The Black Panther Party for Medical Self-Defense

Posted on 31 October 2011 by [Alondra Nelson](#)

<http://alondranelson.wordpress.com/2011/10/31/black-berets-white-coats%E2%80%A8-the-black-panther-party-for-medical-self-defense/>



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Black Berets, White Coats :The Black Panther Party for Medical Self-Defense

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, founded 45 years ago this month by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, is generally remembered for its black berets, revolutionary rhetoric and shootouts with the police.

The Black Panthers' health activism is less well known. This little recalled aspect of the Party's work nevertheless remains one of its more durable legacies. This month's anniversary occasions a reappraisal of the organization in light of its health politics.

Newton and Seale set out to champion and protect black communities. This ambition infamously took the form of armed neighborhood patrols intended to curb police brutality that too often devolved into violent confrontations.

The Black Panthers' protective impulse was more productively channeled into campaigns of *medical* self-defense.

The Party fought to shield disenfranchised communities from exploitative medical research. Such was the case in the spring of 1973 when the University of California at Los Angeles announced plans to establish the Center for the Study and Reduction of Violence. Praised by Governor Ronald Reagan as a cornerstone of his "law and order" administration, the center was to be dedicated to biomedical studies of violence. Among these planned studies were ones that disproportionately singled-out black and Latino prisoners and public school students as research subjects. Another project proposed controversial, invasive brain surgery to remedy aggression.

Through their attorney, the Black Panthers' argued before the California legislature that the urban violence on the 1960s and 1970s was not attributable to the innate pathology of black and brown bodies but was, as H. Rap Brown had poetically put it a few years prior, a social and political phenomenon as "American as cherry pie." The center would be successfully stalled owing in no small part to the Party's intervention.

In addition to safeguarding the poor from bad medicine, the Party disseminated health education and dispensed medical care. For example, in their popular newspaper and on national television—including an appearance on "The Mike Douglas Show" alongside John Lennon and Yoko Ono—they demanded attention for sickle cell anemia, a genetic disease that predominantly affects persons of African descent. The Panthers also provided free sickle cell anemia screening at venues ranging from private homes to public parks.

The activists also offered free medical services at its clinics. Impoverished blacks remained second-class citizens in the American health care system despite recent civil rights strides. They received pitiable care at over-crowded, understaffed and often faraway public hospitals. The Black Panthers' clinics, by contrast, while

modest, offered basic health care from trusted providers at neighborhood-based sites.

The legacy of the Party's clinics persists today. The [Carolyn Downs Medical Center](#) in Seattle bears the name and extends the work of a Black Panther who played an integral role in establishing the group's free health services in that community in 1968.

The Panther imprint is also present in post-Katrina New Orleans. The idea for the Common Ground Health Clinic, which arose fill the gap left by the collapse of the city's medical infrastructure, was inspired by similar programs that co-founder Malik Rahim developed as a member of the New Orleans chapter of the Party. Now an established institution, this Black Panther-inspired clinic has served more than sixty thousand people since it was established in September 2005.

We tend to remember the Party through imagery such as the organization's iconic cat symbol and the many photographs that captured the Panther posture—defiant faces, stiff spines, loaded guns, and leather jackets. Many continue to regard militancy and ephemera as the Party's most significant bequest.

Lost in the hail of gunfire and the heat of the culture wars is the fact that the Panthers also wore the white coats of medicine. Peering through the lens of health activism, we gain new insights into what was most considerable and lasting about the Party.

The Black Panthers asserted health as a right. They demanded universal access to health care. Well before July 1972, when the Tuskegee syphilis study would become a national allegory of race and medical power, the Party shined a light on health inequities.

To reappraise the Black Panthers' as health activists is not to canonize them, but to contemplate civil rights militancy through a more multifaceted prism.

The Young Lords: A reader: “Health and hospitals”



Adequate health care for the poor was one of the chief demands of the Young Lords. Faced with a health-care crisis on various fronts, the Young Lords (together with the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement) started lead poisoning and tuberculosis testing programs, took over Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx, and demanded equal treatment of all Third World peoples.

Articles in “Health and Hospitals”, Chapter 9 of [The Young Lords: A Reader](#) cover the principles of their health program, describe the theoretical and historical rationales used in advancing their arguments, and document specific health initiatives the Young Lords launched in their communities.

Ten Point Health Program

(From the newspaper Young Lords Organization, January 1970, volume 1, number 5)

1. We want total self-determination of all health service at East Harlem, (El Barrio) through an incorporated community-staff governing board for Metropolitan Hospital. (Staff is anyone and everyone working in Metropolitan, except administrators.)
2. We want immediate replacement of all Lindsay and Terenzio administrators by community and staff-appointed people whose practice has demonstrated their commitment to serve our poor community.
3. We demand an immediate end to construction of the new emergency room until the Metropolitan Hospital Community-Staff' Governing Board inspects and approves them or authorizes new plans.
4. We want employment for our people. All jobs filled in El Barrio must be filled by residents first, using on-the-job training and other educational opportunities as bases for service and promotions.
5. We want free publicly supported health care for treatment and prevention
6. We want an end to all fees.
7. We want total decentralization of health — block health officers responsible to the Community-Staff Board should be instituted.
8. We want “door-to-door” preventative health services emphasizing environmental and sanitation control, nutrition, drug addiction, maternal and child care and senior citizen services.
9. We want total control by the Metropolitan Hospital Community-Staff Governing Board of budget allocations, medical policy, along the above points, hiring and firing and salaries of employees, construction and health code enforcement.
10. Any community, union, or workers organization must support all the points of this program and work and fight for them or be shown as what they are-enemies of the poor people of East Harlem

POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

QUE VIVA EL BARRIO! FREE PUERTO RICO NOW!

New York State Chapter
Young Lords Organization

Revolutionary Health Care Program for the People

(From the newspaper Young Lords Organization, January 1970, volume 1, number 5)

Mingo El Loco was a brother off the block who helped out the Young Lords Organization every once in a while. He would loan the Organization his car, would help pass out our literature, would recruit for us .. A few weeks ago Mingo was stabbed by another brother. It happens all the time in the street. Our people are always killing each other off instead of fighting the enemy-the pigs, the businessman, the politician.

The ambulance was called. For one hour it didn't come. Meanwhile the pigs arrived, Mingo was dying on the street, but the police did nothing. Finally, the people tried to take him to the hospital in their own car. He died on the way to Metropolitan.

People dying because of ambulances that arrive late, or in emergency rooms of city hospitals while they wait for hours, happens often. 'The people have become used to butcher health care and resigned to the fact that they'll never be decently treated by the health system. But the Young Lords, after Mingo's death, began to investigate health in New York and we have begun a program to organize the people-community and workers-to demand decent health care.

As we talked to dozens of sympathetic doctors, nurses, medical students, maintenance, clerical and laboratory workers in Metropolitan Hospital, we began to understand more and more about health oppression.

- We learned that many of the diseases that our people die of could be simply cured or even prevented with correct mass health programs which the hospitals do not have. For instance, thousands of children become sick or die because of lead poisoning, from eating fallen plaster in ghetto buildings. A mass lead-poison detection program could save the lives of thousands of our children. Anemia, tuberculosis, bad nutrition, upper respiratory infections, could be stamped out with mass health programs that go out to the people, into the homes and communities, instead of waiting for a patient to come in to the hospital with the disease already in advanced stages.

- We learned that doctors were making 560-70 thousand a year because poor people have to have health care. That their organization, the fascist American Medical Association, for years has been trying to keep the number of medical schools down so that doctors could charge higher fees.

- We learned that the drug companies, like Upjohn, Park and Davis, etc, not only push many useless or harmful drugs just for profit, but that they have much influence in Washington and state legislatures over medical bills. Many times officers of these companies sit on the boards of private hospitals and help determine the policy that has been mistreating our people for years.

- We learned that there are things called health empires: medical schools and private hospitals that through affiliations (contracts with the city) operate and run city hospitals. In New York, for instance, Columbia controls Harlem Hospital, Albert Einstein controls Lincoln Hospital, Beth Israel controls Gouverneur Hospital, New York Medical College controls East Harlem's Metropolitan. These affiliations end up helping the medical school much more than the municipal hospital. For instance, interns and medical students have much more practice and experience in the city

hospital, because in the private hospital, patients are treated by their own doctor and refuse to be treated by students. The poor people who come to the city hospitals are used as guinea pigs, sometimes, for new treatments, methods, new medicines that will then be used on the rich. The priorities for the medical schools are training and research. The needs of the people are for mass, quality free health care. The two are often antagonistic in our society.

- We learned that in our communities, control of health must be taken out of the hands of drug companies, avaricious professionals, pig politicians, and racist administrators and put in the hands of the people. That is why we demand:

COMMUNITY WORKER CONTROL

FREE HEALTH CARE

MASS HEALTH SERVICE

The Young Lords have developed a Ten-Point Program of Health that explains what we want, the minimum necessary for our people-for Puerto Rican, black and poor white oppressed peoples. We have joined with revolutionary workers in other parts of the city, with the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement at Gouverneur Hospital on the Lower East Side, with the Lincoln Hospital workers in the South Bronx, with the Black Panther Party Free Health Clinics in Staten Island and Brooklyn. We are building a city-wide revolutionary health movement that will shake the city to rotten pig core.

The revolutionary health groups have also begun forming an alliance with radical medical students and professionals around a week of activities in February, 1970 – People’s Health Week, which will attempt to have teach-ins, demonstrations, and mass health programs, and educate the people about the difference between capitalist medicine and socialist medicine, between medicine that oppresses the people and medicine that serves the people.

By becoming involved in Breakfast Programs, Clothing Programs, Health Programs, the Young Lords are demonstrating to all Latin and other oppressed peoples that we truly do serve and protect. Wherever the people suffer and resist oppression, we are there to aid, shape and lead their struggle.

Long Live Boricua

Long Live Independent Puerto Rico

Free Health Care for Everyone

Hands off Cha Cha

Venceremos

YOUNG LORDS ORGANIZATION

New York State Headquarters

HEALTH REVOLUTIONARY UNITY MOVEMENT

10 POINT HEALTH PROGRAM

1. WE WANT COMMUNITY-WORKER CONTROL OF ALL HEALTH SERVICES IN OUR OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES.
2. WE WANT THE RIGHT TO FORM ORGANIZATIONS OF PATIENTS AND WORKERS TO FIGHT FOR IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS, BETTER PATIENT CARE, AND TO MAKE HEALTH POLICIES.
3. WE WANT ALL NEW HOSPITALS CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION TO BE BUILT IMMEDIATELY TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF OUR OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES.
4. WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT AND UPGRADING FOR OUR PEOPLE IN ALL HEALTH FACILITIES, AND OPEN ADMISSIONS TO ALL HEALTH SCIENCE SCHOOLS.
5. WE WANT FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL PEOPLE.
6. WE WANT COMMUNITY-RUN HEALTH CLINICS ON EVERY BLOCK TO DEAL WITH MINOR HEALTH PROBLEMS.
7. WE WANT DOOR-TO-DOOR PREVENTIVE CARE TO DEAL WITH SANITATION CONTROL, NUTRITION, DRUG ADDICTION, CHILD DAY CARE, AND SENIOR CITIZEN SERVICES.
8. WE WANT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS THAT EXPOSE THE LEADING HEALTH PROBLEMS, SUCH AS UNEMPLOYMENT, POOR HOUSING, RACISM, MALNUTRITION, POLICE BRUTALITY AND ALL OTHER FORMS OF EXPLOITATION.
9. WE WANT COMMUNITY, STUDENTS, UNIONS, AND WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS TO ACTIVELY SUPPORT AND FIGHT FOR THIS PROGRAMS IN THE INTERESTS OF OUR PEOPLE.
10. THE ROLE OF THE HEALTH REVOLUTIONARY UNITY MOVEMENT IS TO EDUCATE AND UNITE ALL OUR PEOPLE AND TO EXPOSE THE CORRUPT HEALTH SYSTEM THAT KEEPS OUR PEOPLE WEAK AND UNABLE TO FIGHT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION AND COMPLETE LIBERATION.

PROGRAMA DE SALUD DE 10 PUNTOS

1. QUEREMOS EL CONTROL DE TODOS LOS SERVICIOS DE SALUD EN NUESTRAS COMUNIDADES OPRIMIDAS EN MANOS DE JUNTAS DE TRABAJADORES Y LA COMUNIDAD.
2. QUEREMOS EL DERECHO DE FORMAR ORGANIZACIONES DE PACIENTES Y TRABAJADORES PARA LUCHAR POR MEJORES CONDICIONES DE TRABAJO, MEJOR ATENCION MEDICA, Y PARA DECIDIR NUESTRAS PROPIAS POLITICAS DE SALUD.
3. QUEREMOS QUE TODOS LOS HOSPITALES NUEVOS Y EN CONSTRUCCION SEAN EDIFICADOS INMEDIATAMENTE PARA SERVIR LAS NECESIDADES DE NUESTRAS COMUNIDADES OPRIMIDAS.
4. QUEREMOS EMPLEO TOTAL Y POSIBILIDADES DE ADELANTO PARA NUESTRA GENTE EN TODOS LOS SERVICIOS DE SALUD Y ADMISION ABIERTA PARA TODAS LAS ESCUELAS DE SALUD.
5. QUEREMOS ATENCION MEDICA GRATUITA PARA TODA GENTE.
6. QUEREMOS CLINICAS DE SALUD DIRIGIDAS POR LA COMUNIDAD PARA TRATAR LOS PROBLEMAS MENORES DE SALUD.
7. QUEREMOS ATENCION MEDICA PREVENTIVA A DOMICILIO PARA TRATAR CON EL CONTROL DE SANIDAD, NUTRICION, ADICCION A LAS DROGAS, Y QUEREMOS CENTROS DE CUIDADO PARA LOS NIÑOS Y SERVICIOS PARA LOS ANCIANOS.
8. QUEREMOS PROGRAMAS DE EDUCACION QUE EXPONGAN LOS PROBLEMAS DE SALUD MAS IMPORTANTES TALES COMO DESEMPLEO, LA VIVIENDA DE MALA CALIDAD, EL RACISMO, LA DISNUTRICION, LA BRUTALIDAD POLICIA Y CUALQUIER OTRA FORMA DE EXPLOTACION.
9. QUEREMOS QUE LA COMUNIDAD, LOS ESTUDIANTES, LAS ORGANIZACIONES Y UNIONES DE TRABAJADORES, NOS APOYEN ACTIVAMENTE Y LUCHEN POR ESTE PROGRAMA DE INTRES AL PUEBLO.
10. EL OBJETIVO DE H.R.U.M. ES UNIR Y EDUCAR A NUESTRA GENTE, QUEREMOS DESENMASCARAR LA CORUPCION DE UN SISTEMA DE SALUD QUE MANTIENE A NUESTRA GENTE ENFERMA Y SIN CAPACIDAD DE LUCHAR POR NUESTRA AUTODETERMINACION Y LIBERACION COMPLETA.

Autonomous healthcare in the Zapatista communities: "You can't think about health and not think about the river."

June 2010

by Jessica Davies

This article is based on information provided by a compa who has been working to train health promoters in two different areas of Chiapas. He stressed that he could only discuss healthcare in two of the five caracoles, the self-governing geographical regions into which Zapatista territory is divided. Each caracol is autonomous; they all start from the same idea - land and freedom - and the same principles, based on democracy, liberty and justice, but each area has developed distinctly, with a different programme, and a different way of doing things.

Healthcare in the first caracol

In the area where the compa worked first, the people decided to start by creating a big central health clinic. This clinic now serves hundreds of communities. Health promoters from these communities continue to come to the central clinic for training in ways to support people's basic health needs. The next stage was the creation of smaller micro-clinics, and finally, simple basic 'health houses', or consulting rooms, were set up in the majority of the communities. These are often run by only one health promoter, who comes from that community.

If a patient can't be treated at the 'health house', they go to the micro-clinic, or if the promoters there cannot deal with the case, the patient is then referred to the main central clinic. The aim is not to rely on the government at all, but some cases still really need treatment at the state hospital, which is often not an option due to the cost, the distance, and for political reasons. Although full autonomy is not achieved yet, the promoters are doing very well, and starting to develop more specialist care particularly in the care of the eyes and the ear, nose and throat, as well as in women's health.

In the main clinic, there is a laboratory where analysis of samples can be done. There is a special women's consulting/maternity/birth room run by women health promoters. There is an operating theatre, a pharmacy, a 24 hour emergency room and a room for treating eye problems. There is a herbolarium for herbal medicines, most of which come from local plants. The Zapatistas here remain desperately short of medicines, equipment

and resources, but despite this, they continue to strengthen their health service.

This area is the poorest region of Chiapas, there is a greater shortage of food, poorer crops, less land, and difficult cold, often wet, weather. Yet, in this caracol, the health system has been taken on board very well, and the number of health promoters has increased substantially in the last eight years. They continue to go on training courses run either by the communities, or by international groups.

Health promoters

The health promoters are chosen by the communities. They are chosen because of their commitment and desire to learn, and often because they can speak, and perhaps write, in Spanish, although many are not fluent. Many of the training courses are in Spanish, with translators to translate into the appropriate indigenous languages. The health promoters are all volunteers and receive no salary. It is not easy to be a health promoter: they have to give up their daily work helping to provide food for the family, and they usually have to work in their second language.

The training courses are for one week every month. The promoters have to leave their homes, and support and feed themselves while they do the courses, which shows how deeply they believe in what they are doing. They then take the knowledge they have learned back to the community. After two years of training, most health promoters can identify six or seven of the common illnesses.

Health promoters live and work in the clinic, treating people during the day, and being on call for emergencies at night. The more experienced health promoters pass on their knowledge to other local indigenous people who are training to be health promoters. Being a health promoter involves taking on and promoting a new concept of, and approach to, healthcare and treatment, a mixture of their own indigenous culture with western medicine. "We aim not only to treat illnesses, but to create a better system of health, one which respects Maya culture, an autonomous health system".

Healthcare in the second caracol

In the second area where the compa is working the situation is totally different. The healthcare system here is based on health promoters, and 'health houses', tiny surgeries, trying to support the communities. There are no main clinics.

The reality of the illnesses present is determined by the lack of safe water, the insects, and the weather which varies between hot, wet and cold. The houses are very basic structures offering little protection from the climate, with the result that pneumonia is one of the main killers.

The health promoters are trying to control illnesses and promote good health in an area where there was previously no knowledge of clean water or of hygiene. They are trying to change peoples' habits and develop preventive healthcare, but this is very difficult. There is less knowledge and experience in healthcare here than in the highland zone, which is comparatively quite advanced and specialised. The health promoters here are aged between 10 and 76, and many have little knowledge, but it is very good to see them working in a new and different concept of health.

For many years, people have been told that the plant medicines don't work, and they have learned to "want the tablet". This is an example of the damage that can be caused by western culture. The training courses use a mixture of both traditional and western medicine, but in some places the traditional knowledge has been lost, and is having to be re-learned.

Illnesses

In Chiapas, many indigenous people die of curable and preventable diseases. They are desperately poor, and lack clean water and sewerage. They suffer from chronic ill-health, malnutrition and hunger. Many have open fires in their houses and no ventilation. There are therefore a very high percentage of people suffering from parasites, diarrhea, skin problems, malaria, tuberculosis, and other gastro-intestinal and respiratory conditions. Some of the worst problems are respiratory ones, due to their poor living conditions; the children develop pneumonia, and the women chronic bronchitis. There is a lack of knowledge of and treatment for, women's health, and many women die in childbirth and children die before the age of five.

Many communities still have traditional bonesetters, mountain healers, and midwives. In some places, they are regaining the knowledge of using plants as medicine, and returning more to the old ways.

The emphasis throughout is on preventive medicine, promoting good health, teaching people how to maintain good hygiene and have better nutrition, "looking after each other to keep ourselves well". The best medicine for illness is the community; by having a collective approach to healthcare, working together and organising, they can support and care for each other.

Health is not only related to the individual, but to the whole community. It is based on the relationship between the worlds and on respect for the earth. The souls of the dead are under the ground and all living things are connected. "You can't talk about health and not talk about the river".



Government healthcare

A consultation with a doctor would cost the equivalent of 10 days' family income, the medicine 2 days more, and usually the time and distance to a

surgery would make a visit impossible anyway. The government has also attempted to copy the Zapatistas by setting up clinics in indigenous communities, but these normally have no doctors, health promoters or medicines at all, as doctors don't want to work in these communities, and the treatment is not free.

The care offered to indigenous people by government hospitals is both inadequate and expensive. They will often ask a patient if they are Zapatista, and refuse to treat them if they are. An offer of treatment can therefore be based on political grounds. Indigenous people are given no respect in these hospitals, and suffer ill-treatment and discrimination, with no understanding of their language or culture.

The community is everyone : the Zapatista miracle

Zapatista healthcare is completely independent of all government funding and control; they have developed their own autonomous forms of health, democracy and decision-making. In Zapatista clinics and health houses people are treated with respect, love and responsibility. Because the health promoters are local, people can be talked to in their own language, by someone who understands their needs and culture. In the government hospitals, indigenous people are discriminated against, misunderstood, ignored. Many non-Zapatistas now come to the Zapatista centres for treatment, knowing they will not be turned away.

This means that, in a country where most people, particularly indigenous people, cannot afford medical treatment, which may not be available to them anyway for political reasons, Zapatista healthcare is open to everyone. Non-Zapatistas only pay for the basic cost of medicines or any materials needed; the treatment is free. Healthcare is for all, without distinction. The paramilitaries who have attacked the community with firearms still get treated; the compa watched a promoter treating the man who had just shot and killed the promoter's brother, without hesitation or rancour. "We are all brothers and sisters".

BROWN RESOURCES

***From Herbal Freedom School page
on Queer Herbalism blog
queerherbalism.blogspot.com/p/herbal-freedom-school.html***

History:

Herbology- Herbal Medicine

<http://www.crystalinks.com/herbology.html>

Ethnomedicine: Native American

Medicine <http://www.sacredearth.com/ethnobotany/medicines/nativeamerican.php>

History of Herbalism- Christopher

Hobbs http://www.christopherhobbs.com/website/library/history/history_of_herbalism.html

Curanderismo

-toward a deeper history, red/brown medicine resurgence, indigenous medicine healing and the struggle for justice

<http://ejfood.blogspot.com/2012/08/indigenous-medicine-and-environmental.html#!/2012/08/indigenous-medicine-and-environmental.html>

An historical overview of Traditional Chinese medicine and ancient Chinese medical ethics

http://www.medizin-ethik.ch/publik/historical_overview.htm

Wu Xing (Five Element theory)

<http://www.tcmstudent.com/theory/Five%20Element%20Theory.html>

Kampo Medicine (Japan):

<http://www.itmonline.org/arts/kampo.htm>

Unani Medicine

<http://www.drgrrotte.com/Unani.shtml>

Pan-African Indigenous Herbal Medicine

http://www.academia.edu/957110/Pan_African_Indigenous_Herbal_Medicine_-_Technology_Transfer

Slave Medicine:

<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-65172149731401/unrestricted/CH1.PDF>

<http://www.africanamericanmuseum.org/freedomgarden.html>

Folk Medicine among the Gullah:

http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=aas_theses

From OURStory and Herbal Freedom School page on Queer Herbalism blog

A page about POC and queer healer history.

**See Herbal Freedom School page for book lists.*

See more about race, anti-racism, and anti-oppression at Race Matters.

Indigenous Medicine in the Americas

<http://www.sacredearth.com/ethnobotany/medicines/nativeamerican.php>

North America- U.S., Canada

Directory of North American Indigenous Portal Websites:

<http://www.firstnationsseeker.ca/> (list of tribes and websites)

Indigenous Medicinal Plants of the Americas article

<http://uctp.blogspot.com/2006/12/indigenous-medicinal-plants-of.html>

<http://www.manataka.org/medicineoftheearthmother.html>

<http://www.manataka.org/page169.html>

Native American Ethnobotany database:

<http://herb.umd.umich.edu/>

Ohlone Medicine:

<http://www.cabrillo.edu/~crsmith/OhloneMed.html>

Choctaw Medicine:

<http://www.choctawnation.com/culture-heritage/choctaw-traditions/choctaw-medicine/>

Cherokee Medicine:

<http://www.aaanativearts.com/cherokee/cherokee-medicine.htm>

<http://www.powersource.com/cherokee/herbal.html>

Medicinal Plant Chart

<http://www.aanativearts.com/choke/choke-medicinal-plant-chart.htm>

Pharmacopeia

<http://www.aanativearts.com/choke/choke-pharmacopeia.htm>

Cheyenne:

The ethnobotany of the Northern Cheyenne Indians of Montana

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/7019577>

Plains:

Edible Wild Plants of the Prairie - An Ethnobotanical Guide by Kindscher Kuhn (See Scribd.com)

-documents the medicinal use of 203 native prairie plants by the Plains Indians

Creek:

<http://bearmedicineherbals.com/creek-indian-medicine-phm-excerpt-by-phyllis-light.html>

Seminole:

<http://www.motherearthliving.com/gardening/seminole-medicine-plants-and-magic.aspx>

Healing Plants: Medicine of the Florida Seminole Indians [Alice Micco Snow, Susan Enns Stans]

Taino:

Plants and Animals

<http://caneycircle.owlweb.org/animals.html>

Medicine Wheel

<http://caneycircle.owlweb.org/images/medicine%20wheel%20good.jpg>

Taino and the Mayans

<http://caneycircle.owlweb.org/tainomaya.html>

Chamanismo Taíno: El Behique

<http://pueblosoriginarios.com/centro/antillas/taino/behique.html>

Caribbean

Cuba:

Green Medicine

www.cbi.or.jp/cbi/DigitalTL/cuba.html

<http://www.farmradio.org/radio-resource-packs/package-53-the-transition-to-sustainable-organic-agriculture/cuba-promotes-green-medicine/>

<http://www.afrocubaweb.com/infomed/med.htm>

http://lecturas.cibercuba.com/lecturas/ciencia/origenes_de_la_medicina_en_cuba.html

Jamaica:

Herbal Remedies

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRAvL37wQNk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GZ3TkMaf9o>

Bush Doctor Herbal Teachings

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgMbPphWEnc>

Mexico, Central and South America

Curanderismo

-toward a deeper history, red/brown medicine resurgence, indigenous medicine healing and the struggle for justice

<http://ejfood.blogspot.com/2012/08/indigenous-medicine-and-environmental.html#!/2012/08/indigenous-medicine-and-environmental.html>

<http://ejfood.blogspot.com/2012/08/indigenous-medicine-and-environmental.html>

Central America:

Bush Medicine of Belize

<http://consejo.bz/belize/bushmedicine.html>

Ethnobotany of the Incas

<http://www.springerreference.com/docs/html/chapterdbid/77920.html>

South America:

Traditional Herbs of South America and Mexico

http://www.anniesremedy.com/chart.php?use_ID=196

African Diaspora Herbal Medicine Orisha/Yorubic Medicine/Ifa Medicine/Path of Osain:

The Ifá Medicine of West Africa

<http://www.drgrotte.com/AfricanMedicine.shtml>

Yorubic Medicine: The Art of Divine Herbology

<http://ip.aaas.org/tekindex.nsf/2a9c4e44835b04ea85256a7200577a64/ccf06dca08c3532185256ae700755f43/Body/M1?OpenElement>

Orisha Body Systems, Physical Correspondences

<https://www.planetherbs.com/theory/yorubic-medicine-the-art-of-divine-herbology.html>

Herbs associated with Orishas:

<http://tribes.tribe.net/75654caa-e0ed-4c39-9a6c-337a2656c06c/thread/55b48824-1a69-4079-8edd-2542a18118d3>

<http://lukumipeople.blogspot.com/2013/04/the-ewe-herbs-and-presiding-orisha.html>

Ewe Orisha: A treatise on the role of plants in the Yoruba Religion

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/19710495/Ewe-Orisha-Yoruba>

Tribe of the Sun: Plants, their element, orisha, spiritual and medicinal uses
<http://www.tribeofthesun.com/plants.htm>

New world herbs used in Ifa-based practices
http://www.wemba-music.org/orisha_and_palo_herbs.htm

Saving Osain herbs: A conservationist approach to orisha worship (audio)
<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/theh2onetwork/2011/03/02/saving-osain-herbs-a-conservationist-approach-to-orisha-worship>

Kemetic Medicine

<http://kemeticyoga.com/what-is-kemetic-yoga/history-of-kemetic-yoga/>

Traditional Chinese Medicine

An historical overview of Traditional Chinese medicine and ancient Chinese medical ethics
http://www.medizin-ethik.ch/publik/historical_overview.htm

Traditional South Asian and Southeast Asian Medicine

India

<https://www.ncbs.res.in/HistoryScienceSociety/content/overview-indian-healing-traditions>

http://www.ayurveda.com/online_resource/index.html

<http://www.medindia.net/ayurveda/>

http://www.academia.edu/834957/Traditional_Indian_Systems_of_Healing_and_Medicine_Ayurveda

Thailand

http://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Thailand/sub5_8g/entry-3301.html

Traditional Tibetan Medicine

<http://www.aruramed.org/tibetan-medicine>

Filipino Traditional Medicine

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/22046305/Filipino-Traditional-Medicine-report>

http://www.jadedragon.com/tao_heal/healingarts1.html

Radical OURstory

Health Care Organized from Below: The Zapatista Experience

<http://www.narconews.com/Issue44/article2502.html>

Health and Autonomy: The Case of Chiapas

http://www.who.int/social_determinants/resources/csdh_media/autonomy_mexico_2007_en.pdf

Community Based Education for Health

<http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org/advances/health/>

<http://alondranelson.wordpress.com/2011/10/31/black-berets-white-coats%E2%80%A8-the-black-panther-party-for-medical-self-defense/>

Brown Berets and the Tiburcio Vasquez Medical Clinic

<http://www.tvhc.org/AboutUs/History.aspx>

The Health Initiatives of the Young Lords

http://www.hofstra.edu/pdf/community/culctr/culctr_events_healthcare0310_%20horvath_paper.pdf

Ten Point Health Program of the Young Lords

http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/Young_Lords_health.html

Injustice and Inequality

Forced Sterilization of Native American Women

<http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/6242/Forced-Sterilization-of-Native-Americans.html>

Native American Health Suffers Due to Inequality

http://www.progressive.org/mp_warne052008

Health and Indigenous People: Recommendations for the Next Generation

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1447251/>

Health Inequities in the Asian American Community

<http://www.advancingequality.org/news-media/news/press-release-new-report-highlights-disparities-among-growing-asian-american>

Brown Media:

Radio Curious: Health Care and the Black Panthers (interview)

<http://www.upress.umn.edu/press/press-clips/radio-curious-health-care-the-black-panthers>

Alondra Nelson: Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the fight against Medical Discrimination (video)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2TTLJhP2Jk>

Women Brown Berets (prezi presentation)

http://prezi.com/w_zbs4n6oegw/women-brown-berets/

BROWN READS

F.U.B.U. (For us by us)

Woman Who Glows in the Dark by Elena Avila

African American Folk Healing by Stephanie Mitchem

African American Slave Medicine: Herbal and Non-Herbal Treatments by Herbert C. Covey

Secret Doctors: Ethnomedicine of African Americans by Wonda L. Fontenot

HealthQuest Staying Strong: Staying Strong: Reclaiming the Wisdom of African-American Healing (Healthquest : Total Wellness for Body, Mind & Spirit) by Sara L Reese and Therman Evans

Curandero A Life in Mexican Folk Healing by Dr. Eliseo "Cheo" Torres with Timothy L. Sawyer, Jr.

Healing with Herbs and Rituals by Dr. Eliseo Cheo Torres

Curandero Conversations: El Niño Fidencio, Shamanism and Healing Traditions of the Borderlands by Antonio Zavaleta , Alberto Salinas, Jr.

Red Medicine: Traditional Indigenous Rites of Birthing and Healing by Patrisia Gonzales

Nature's Weeds, Native Medicines: Native American Herbal Secrets
By Marie Micza

Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality
By Sue Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, Sabine Lang

Books

**compiled by folks at Curanderismo, The Healing Arts of Mexico*

Honoring The Medicine: The Essential Guide To Native American Healing. Kenneth Cohen

Native Healer, Bobby Lake Thom (Medicine Grizzlybear)

Hawk Woman Dancing With The Moon: Sacred Medicine For Today's Woman by Tela Starhawk Lake (on women's medicine and moon time)

Walking In The Sacred Manner: Healers, Dreamers, And Pipe Carriers--Medicine Women Of The Plains, Mark St. Pierre

The Native American Sweatlodge, Joseph Bruchac

A Handbook of Native American Herbs by Alma R. Hutchens

Nature's Weeds, Native Medicines: Native American Herbal Secrets by Marie Miczak

Mexico, Central and South America

**majority compiled by folks at Curanderismo, The Healing Arts of Mexico*

Red Medicine, Traditional Indigenous Rites of Birthing and Healing. Patrisia Gonzales
Fire Heart, The Life and Teachings of Maya Medicine Woman Miss Beatrice Torres
Waight

Curanderismo: Mexican American Folk Healing, Robert Trotter & Juan Antonio
Chavira

Healing with Herbs and Rituals: A Mexican Tradition, Eliseo Torres
Folk Healer: The Mexican-American Tradition of Curanderismo, Eliseo Torres

Woman Who Glows in the Dark: A Curandera Reveals Traditional Aztec Secrets of
Physical and Spiritual Health, Elena Avila, RN

Wind in the Blood: Mayan Healing & Chinese Medicine. Hernan Garcia, Antonio
Sierra, Gilberto Balam, Jeff Conant, et al.

Delfina Cuero: Her Autobiography, An Account of Her Last Years, and Her
Ethnobotanic Contributions. Delfina Cuero (Kumeyaay) and Florence Connolly
Shipek.

Meditations for InterSpiritual Wisdom: Practices and Readings drawn from the
World's Spiritual Traditions - Chapter on Mesoamerican Meditation & Prayer by Grace
Alvarez Sesma

The Medicine Bear – A Novel for Herbalists and Healers by Jesse Wolf Hardin
(Publisher, Plant Healer Magazine)

Sastun: One Woman's Apprenticeship with a Maya Healer. Arvigo, Rosita.

Spiritual Bathing: Healing Rituals and Traditions from Around the World, Arvigo,
Rosita.

The Woman in the Shaman's Body: Reclaiming the Feminine in Religion and
Medicine, Tedlock, Barbara.

Healing with Medicinal Plants of the West: Cultural and Scientific Basis for Their Use. Cecilia Garcia and JD Adams. (Cecilia Garcia was a strong contemporary Chumash Medicine Woman living in Ensenada, BC. There is a lot of cross-cultural plant knowledge and usage between Baja California and Alta California Native peoples)

Temalpakh: Cahuilla Indian Knowledge and Usage of Plants. Lowell John Bean and Katherine S. Saubel. (Katherine S. Saubel, is a true Elder, Cahuilla Medicine Woman and Activist, passed on in 2011.)

An Aztec Herbal: The Classic Codex of 1552 (Botanical information compiled by Aztec physician Martin de la Cruz in that time period. Also known as the Codex De La Cruz - Badiano), William Gates.

Plant Spirit Medicine: The Healing Power of Plants, Cowan, Eliot.

Books by Miguel Leon Portillo.

Maria Sabina: Selections (Poets for the Millennium) by Maria Sabina and Jerome Rothenberg

Maria Sabina and Her Mushroom Velada (Ethno-mycological studies) by María Sabina

Antonio Zavaleta and Alberto Salinas Jr. Curandero Conversations: El Niño Fidencio, Shamanism and Healing Traditions of the Borderlands.

Trevino-Hernandez, Alberto. Curanderos: They Heal the Sick with Prayers and Herbs

Bobette Perrone, H. Henrietta Stockel, Victoria Krueger. Curanderas, Medicine Women & Doctors.

West, John O. Mexican-American Folklore

Davidow, Joie. Infusions of Healing: A Treasury of Mexican American Herbal Remedies.

DeStefano, Anthony. Latino Folk Medicine

Sandoval, Annette. Homegrown Healing: Traditional Home Remedies from Mexico

Babb, Jewel. Border Healing Woman: The Story of Jewel Babb as told to Pat LittleDog

Native Voices Suggested Readings:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/resources/suggested-readings-general-public.html>

- Black Elk, Nicholas (Oglala Sioux) and John G. Neihardt. *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961.
- Buhner, Stephen Harrod. *Sacred Plant Medicine: The Wisdom of Native American Herbalism*. Rochester: Bear & Co., 2006.
- Cuero, Delfina (Kumeyaay) and Florence Connolly Shipek. *Delfina Cuero: Her Autobiography, An Account of Her Last Years, and Her Ethnobotanic Contributions*. Menlo Park: Ballena Press, 1991.
- Deloria Jr., Vine (Standing Rock Sioux). *The World We Used to Live In: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men*. Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2006.
- Hensley, William L. Ig̃giagruk (Iñupiaq). *Fifty Miles from Tomorrow: A Memoir of Alaska and the Real People*. New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2009.
- Hungry Wolf, Beverly (Blackfoot). *The Ways of My Grandmothers*. New York: Morrow, 1980.
- Lame Deer, John (Lakota) and Richard Erdoes. *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972.
- McMaster, Gerald (Plains Cree and Blackfoot) and Clifford E. Trafzer (Wyandot). *Native Universe: Voices of Indian America*. Washington, D.C.: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, in association with National Geographic, 2004.
- Mehl-Madrona, Lewis (Cherokee/Lakota). *Coyote Medicine: Lessons from Native American Healing*. New York: Fireside, 1997.
- _____. *Narrative Medicine: The Use of History and Story in the Healing Process*. Rochester: Bear & Co., 2007.
- Niethammer, Carolyn. *I'll Go and Do More: Anne Dodge Wauneka, Navajo Leader and Activist*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon (Laguna). *Storyteller*. New York: Seaver Books, 1981.
- Snell, Alma Hogan (Crow). *Grandmother's Grandchild: My Crow Indian Life*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
- _____. *A Taste of Heritage: Crow Indian Recipes and Herbal Medicines*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006.
- St. Pierre, Mark and Tilda Long Soldier (Oglala Lakota). *Walking in the Sacred Manner: Healers, Dreamers, and Pipe Carriers—Medicine Women of the Plains Indians*. New York: Touchstone, 1995.
- Standing Bear, Luther (Lakota). *My People the Sioux*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. Originally published in 1928.
- _____. *My Indian Boyhood*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988. Originally published in 1931.
- Warren, William W. (Anishinabe). *History of the Ojibway People*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984.

The Caribbean

Publications by Spider- a Taino elder

<http://www.healing-arts.org/spider/publications.htm#scrolldown>

Talking Taino: Caribbean Natural History from a Native Perspective - By William F. Keegan, Lisabeth A. Carlson

Ancient Borinquen: Archaeology and Ethnohistory of Native Puerto Rico

edited by Peter E. Siegel

Plantas Medicinales de Puerto Rico: Folklore Fundamentos Cientificos by Esteban Nunez Melendez

Lista de Plantas Medicinales de Puerto Rico

<http://www.ethno-botanik.org/Heilpflanzen/Plantas-medicinales-Puerto-Rico.html#Volksname>

El Poder de las Plantas Medicinales

<http://www.cienciapr.org/es/external-news/el-poder-de-las-plantas-medicinales>

The African Diaspora

Hoodoo Medicine: Gullah Herbal Remedies by Faith Mitchell

More on Hoodoo Medicine- <http://www.hoodoomedicine.com/index.htm>

Articles, etc.

Codice de la Cruz-Bodiano- oldest written herbal manuscript of the Americas according to Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

<http://www.inah.gob.mx/paseos/biblioteca/>

Taino Resurgence: Gardens, Shrubs, Herbs

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/26519910/Taino-Resurgence-Gardens-Shrubs-Herbs>

Naturally Occurring Plants Used on the Hopi Reservation for Medicine and Food

http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_p024/rmrs_p024_343_344.pdf

For info on Q/POC Healers, Allies/Anti-Oppressive Healers and POC led herb classes, seminars, etc. go to:

<http://queerherbalism.blogspot.com/p/poc-healers.html>
and <http://queerherbalism.blogspot.com/p/herbal-freedom-school.html>

**If you'd like to be on this list, email queeringherbalism@gmail.com!*

QUEER READS

QueerStory/ HirStory

<http://www.dancingtoeaglespiritsociety.org/twospirit.php>

Trans and Two- Spirit Resources

Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality by Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas and Sabine Lang

The Transgender Herb Garden- Zine about natural transitioning Male-to-Female (MTF)

http://archive.qzap.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/54

Natural Transitioning: An FTM Alternative by Tristan Skye (book)

National Transgender Library and Archives

<http://guides.lib.umich.edu/content.php?pid=29017&sid=253054>

The Special Collections Library at the University of Michigan houses all the items from the National Transgender Library and Archives. The NTL&A is a repository for books, magazines, films, videotapes, journals and newspaper articles, unpublished papers, photographs, artwork, letters, personal papers, memorabilia, and ephemera related to the transgender and transsexual movement.

List of therapists (experienced with transgender persons)

<http://www.drbecky.com/therapists.html>

Shamanism and Gender Transformation

<http://whyshamanismnow.com/2009/09/gender-transformation-in-shamanism/>

Queer Mental Health

<http://www.queermentalhealth.org/>

A community-based support and resource site for queer people with mental health issues. They welcome anybody including (but by no means limited to) people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited, intersexed, queer, questioning, and allies as well.

List of suggested guidelines for practitioners and resources for consumers:

<http://transhealth.vch.ca/for-service-providers-2/standards-of-care>

Guides written by Olivia Ashbee & Joshua Goldberg

- Trans people and Cancer

http://www.cancer-network.org/media/pdf/Trans_people_and_cancer.pdf

- Trans people and Cardiovascular Disease

<http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/trans-care-trans-people-and-cardiovascular-disease/>

- Trans People and Diabetes

<http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/trans-care-trans-people-and-diabetes/>

- Trans People and Osteoporosis

<http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/trans-care-trans-people-and-osteoporosis/>

- Trans People and Vaccinations

<http://lgbtqpn.ca/library/trans-care-trans-people-and-vaccinations/>

Health Info and Resources:

<http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/publications/lgbt-health-resources/>

LGBT health report:

http://www.iom.edu/~media/Files/Report_Files/2011/The-Health-of-Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender-People/LGBT_Health_2011_Report_Brief.pdf

Sexually Transmitted Infections in Women who have Sex with Women: [A Fact Sheet for Healthcare Providers](#)

(PDF)

[Institute of Medicine's LGBT Health Report](#)

Trans Advocacy:

http://fchc.convio.net/site/DocServer/com886_transCareSheet-brochure_v2_06.17.2014-nocrops.pdf?docID=12081

<http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/trans?page=lib-00-02>

<http://www.transequality.org/issues>

<http://www.transequality.org/know-your-rights><http://srlp.org/resources/fact-sheet-transgender-gender-nonconforming-youth-school/>

Training

<https://lgbt.ucsf.edu/lgbt-education-and-training>

Go to <http://queerherbalism.blogspot.com/p/herbal-freedom-school.html> for more information on Free Classes, Syllabi, Study Guides, Textbooks and Answer Keys, and other awesome websites and additional information.

Support the School of Liberation Healing and Medicine:

<https://www.patreon.com/liberationhealing>

Join the 2 Part/12 week Herbal Freedom School Program!

Herbal Freedom School (Part 1)

Explore POC-centered, decolonial, pro-queer healing histories at your own pace. We'll discuss Liberatory Medicine, Decolonial Health and Healing and Ancestral Healing Traditions. We'll reference Partnering with Plants and the Queering Herbalism volumes as our guides and you'll also be challenged to establish deeper connections to your own ancestral traditions through weekly exercises and reflections.

Register: <https://coursecraft.net/courses/z9QXJ>

Herbal Freedom School (Part 2)

Explore POC-centered, decolonial, pro-queer healing histories over the course of 6 weeks. In Part 2 of the program we'll discuss Liberatory Medicine, Decolonial Health and Healing and Ancestral Healing and Plant Traditions. We'll use the Partnering with Plants and Queering Herbalism volumes as our guides. See you there!

Apply: <https://goo.gl/forms/7QZEjP4SgxrRHZDf2>

Other Readings:

Queering Herbalism volumes and Special editions

Liberatory Medicine Making volumes

Partnering with Plants

Herbal Freedom School volumes

Get them here: [Etsy.com/shop/afrogenderqueer](https://etsy.com/shop/afrogenderqueer)

Hope you've enjoyed this sharing session! Thanks for being a co-visionary in the Herbal Revolution.

See you next time!

Until then you can keep up to speed at:

Queerherbalism.blogspot.com/p/herbal-freedom-school.html

If you'd like your name on the healer lists or if you have books or other resources that you think would make a great addition to the next edition, email me at queeringherbalism@gmail.com.

Please remember to support the work of the healers and authors in this compilation.

Liberation and Healing,

Afro-Genderqueer

Philosophactivist/ Afrovisionary