

# Transformational Life Event Reflection



A culminating project submitted pertaining to the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Metaphysical Sciences, M.Sc.

**by: Isaac Sierra III**



*For Maia, Ricky, Isaiah,  
& all future descendants.*



**Master's Culminating Project Evaluation  
Transformational Life Event Reflection**

**Date:** October 21, 2014

**Author:** Isaac Sierra III

**Project Title:** Transformational Life Event Reflection

**Degree Title:** Master of Metaphysical Sciences

**Project Committee Member:** Alecia Rostad

**Status:** Pass

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**Requirements:**

This project fulfills the requirements for the *Transformational Life Event Reflection* project option. It includes a personal relevance introduction, the main body of the work, an artistic component, properly cited sources, and a bibliography. All sections of the work were masterfully completed.

**Focus:**

The focus for the project is clear and powerful and is carried throughout the paper. In the words of the author, the main message is "the physical death of my father, and the consequences that it brought upon me mentally and spiritually; along with the roads that it led me to." This resulted in a profound shift in perspective and was a transformative life event.

**Comments:**

The universe works in mysterious ways and I feel that your Master's Culminating Project comes through in perfect timing for me to receive the blessings of your story. I'm honored to have the opportunity to review your Transformational Life Event Reflection, Isaac.

I love that you begin your story with a synchronistic dream. As the reader, I do not know that it is a dream and then when I do realize, the energy and emotions of the dream seep into the unfolding events of the story and it is hard to separate them. They co-exist.

As I read your story, I'm simultaneously flashing back and forth from your story, to my own life story, and remembering my own connections with my departed beloveds and the path that I have been led down through their guidance, building a bridge to the ancestral realm.

Your story has a beautiful, melodic flow that is captivating through and through. I love how each realization leads to the next and you weave a web of interconnection that defies time and space, opening the reader's heart and mind to the infinite possibilities for connection beyond the physical plane.

The artwork and photos that you include really bring this story to life and help the reader to connect on a multidimensional level. Each artistic work and photo is significant and adds richness to your project. My personal favorite, is "Elegua." I had not heard of this deity before and I'm thankful to you for bringing him into my awareness. I love how you notice red and black as being significant to you culturally, historically, resonating with you on an energetic level as a sign that you are meant to connect with this energy. As I read your story and gaze at your artwork, it really brings Elegua's energy through in a profound, experiential way.

I find the information you provide about Espiritismo and Boveda to be very interesting and I'm glad that you chose to go into some detail about how to construct this type of altar and its significance. I had not been exposed to these practices before and I'm thankful for it coming into my awareness through your story.

Congratulations on completing this final requirement for the masters program! You've done an amazing job with your project and I hope that this story will continue to find its way into the world for others to read. I know I'm the better for it. Thank you.

Thesis Committee Member Signature

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alvin Patel", written over a horizontal line.

**TRANSFORMATIONAL LIFE EVENT REFLECTION**

**by**

**Isaac Sierra III**

**A culminating project submitted pertaining to the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Metaphysical Sciences, M.Sc.**

**August 4, 2014**

**University of Metaphysical Sciences**

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

**Transformational Life Event Reflection**

**This is to certify that the M.Sc. Culminating Project of**

**Isaac Sierra III**

**has been approved by the Review Committee for the degree requirement for the**

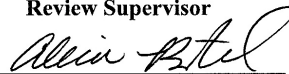
**Master of Metaphysical Sciences, M.Sc.**

**from University of Metaphysical Sciences**

**Review Committee:**

  
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**Review Supervisor**

  
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**Member**

  
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**Member**

***“The average person will experience approximately 7 major rights of passage during their life....psychologically speaking they are unavoidable stages of transformation.”***

***— Michael Tsarion***

While making his move on the chess board his smile seemed to playfully challenge me, as if he were curious to see if his son would make him proud by being up to the task. Filled with silence, a warm glow, and an unbreakable bond that we shared, the room felt as peaceful as could be. I confidently pondered my next move, when I had that feeling that some get when someone is staring, and I looked over my left shoulder at the double glass sliding door. The weather outside had the opposite atmosphere. Thunder, rain, and wind seemed to explode unrelentingly; with lightning flashing nonstop, like the paparazzi at a celebrity award show. And there, with her face sobbing and yelling my name, was my mother, pounding on the glass desperately pleading for me to come out. “Isaac!”, “Isaac!”, “Isaac!”, she continued, but as if she was not even there, I calmly turned back towards my father and our smiles locked and I lifted my hand to promptly proceed with the game. And just then, I awoke.

“What an odd dream!” I thought, and I noticed that my heart area literally felt very heavy. Surely, this had to be because I really missed my long distance girlfriend at the time. Wow, how much I thought I missed her; how much I thought I was in love; with the naiveness of a fifteen year old.



I went on with my morning, preparing myself for school. When I hit the shower, the pain in my chest grew heavier. “Oh! How I miss you! It pains me so!” was my erroneous interpretation, but I convinced myself that it would all be okay. After all, in only ten days I would be traveling back to my native country to live with Dad, and then I would be reunited with this girl whom I considered to be the love of my life at the time.

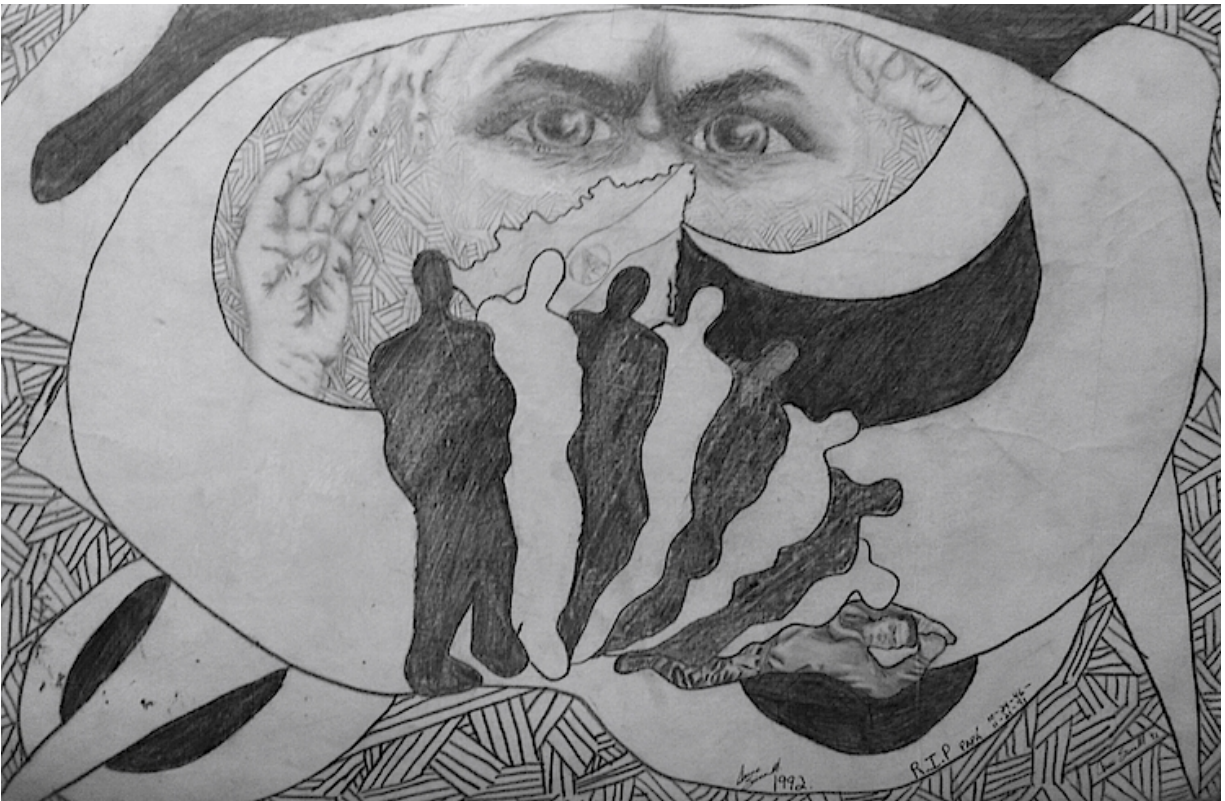
At around 10:15am, I had my head down in Spanish class when I heard my name called. This was a rarity... a student aide from the office was there to retrieve me from the classroom. “Your mom is here to pick you up, you’re going home.” she told me, to my disbelief, as we walked down the hall. Mom had always been the type to send me to school no matter what, even if I was as sick as a dog on life support; and I could not recall her ever getting me from school early. But I smiled, “cool!” I thought.

There she was in the office looking strong and dignified. She finished signing whatever she had to sign and she turned to me and said in a soft, breaking voice, “Your father is sick and he might not make it; we have to go see him. Right now!”.

First we had to go to the middle school to get my sister too. On the way there, I remember being quite positive. I was saying to myself in firm belief and certainty that I would sit by my father’s side and feed him love and positive words and do whatever was needed. That, coupled with my presence alone, would surely ensure that he would recuperate; I had absolutely no doubt, it had to be this way.

I do not exactly remember the explanation that my mother gave me, but for some reason we needed to go to her parent's house before leaving to the airport. And as she called for me and my sister to walk into one of the bedrooms with her, my grandma's quietude didn't go unnoticed. She seemed to be lurking silently and patiently, holding back in the same manner vultures do when they spot a creature on the verge of death.

Before the door could close behind me, all of the strength my mother carried seemed to deflate the way a balloon does when untied. She unmasked herself and blurted out with tears falling stronger with her every word, "I am sorry Isaac, your father has died!". I heard my sister screaming in the background as I collapsed to the floor, weeping; unknowingly shedding the skin of my childhood forever.



Drawing made by myself months after my father's passing (©Isaac Sierra III, 1992).

***“Synchronicity is the coming together of inner and outer events in a way that cannot be explained by cause and effect and that is meaningful to the observer.”***

***— Carl Jung***

I pondered how just a week before his departure, I randomly doodled and scribbled together a sketch without knowing what I would finish up drawing. To my surprise, it ended up being a picture of him dressed as an angel, halo and all, smiling, and holding a big crucifix in his hands. Was this a warning, a sign, or some kind of frequency that I had tapped into? Or was it his spirit? Or *my* spirit?

As I dragged along like a crippled zombie with the required mechanical ritual processes and duties for the next few days, I constantly recalled minute details dismissed as chance in the past, and started connecting dots obsessively as if my name was Sherlock. I speak of details such as randomly looking out the window just as his car would pull up to come and visit me at grandma’s house. Or like picking up the phone to call him just to find that he was already on the line greeting me “Hello” after just having dialed for me also, simultaneously. Perhaps it was always there, this connection between he and I. I may have been oblivious to it., but not now, for it was all I had left...

What about the dream I had of us playing chess? Or how about the dream cousin Ana had in Canada two days after his death, where he kept repeatedly badgering her with random numbers, over and over and over again, until she finally woke up and wrote them down. She meant to play

the numbers in the big lottery, but forgot, only to find out that they had certainly been the winning ones that day. “He did always make me promise that I would make sure to look after you and your sister”, she said, making sense of why he would have tried to help her win. Or how about her sister Carmen telling of how just a week before, he demanded to speak to her, specifically. “I’m going to die soon!”, he proclaimed to his niece with saddened, moist eyes. “No! Why do you say such things, Uncle? You’re still very young, and you have things to look forward to. Isaac is coming to live with you soon!”, she replied in an effort to console his quite troubled, morbid prediction.

Also, how could I forget how just a month before that, I hugged him unknowingly for the last time. “I’ll see you in December,” I whispered in his ear. “If God is willing,” he replied, with a gentle grin. It struck me as odd that he would say that. Was he being sarcastic? Was he perhaps just being cordial with those words? I have to wonder because he was a heralded atheist. “One day, when you read enough, you’ll understand,” the former professor and respected scholar would say about the matter when I would question it.

Lately he had been displaying many signs of spirituality, though, according to many witnesses that approached me in bleak consolation attempts. I could not help but wonder if he might have actually known that it would not be in God’s will for us to meet again. Was it something beyond him speaking through his soft-toned vocal chords? The mystery kept engraving questions while leaving and piling up the evidences that only propelled my curiosity further and further still.

One day, while I was frailly feeling fairly depressed by his absolute absence, he appeared to me in a dream: “Son!”. I looked up, and there he was standing in a stairway going upwards. He looked down towards me and said no more. Instead, he seemed to speak with a familiar gesture; standing spine straight, with his chin up slightly, he took a deep breath, and then nodded one time as he appeared to commune with his eyes. I knew what it meant...

Oftentimes, I sat across from him as he gulped down that liquid poison that deviated his fortunes and brought him to an end. Mostly, I would just listen to what he had to say because he shared profound and in-depth views about a variety of subjects, despite his being under alcoholic influence. It would seem funny to me sometimes how he would straighten out his back, lift his bottom jaw a bit, and profusely inhale pride in deeply while explaining to me what the “Nicaraguan Indian that runs through our veins” really is and stands for. “One day you will understand!” he would proclaim, to my convivial amusement.

*“There's nowhere you can be that isn't where you're meant to be...”*

— *John Lennon*

As I developed from a teen into young adulthood, I oftentimes prayed deeply and dug deep into subjects such as psychology, history, and world religions. But I clung steadily to a point of view my mother cemented in me from an early age when it came to matters concerning spirits and things of the sort. “Those things only exist for those who want to believe them,” she would tell me; and it made sense to me. “Why waste time on such nonsense?”, I would think cleverly, while picturing my father as a long-gone past.

However, a turn of events would soon manifest that he apparently may have had a hand in...

Once, as a girlfriend of mine handed me a drink, without precedent, I was certain that she had put something in it. My inner voice told me so, that voice that made my ego feel like a sure and intelligent young man. She probably did it to make me fall for her or something like that, but being a total nonbeliever in what I clearly considered to be nonsensical, I gulped her concoction down with no problem, laughing off the superstitious attempt.

A couple of days later, I bluntly confronted her about it over the phone just for kicks. “You put something in that drink you gave me, didn’t you?” I asked, in a cocky tone. After playing dumb to no avail and realizing I had called out her hand, she blurted, “How did you know?”. She then confessed that she and her sister had put together a potion they learned from their Haitian mother

who practiced Vodou. I did not even mind, I brushed it off laughingly, like a perfectly arrogant ignoramus. But the seed had been planted, or maybe even implanted. My curiosity had been sparked, and it would not let me forget about it.

I always felt a profound need to quench my thirst for information about anything that interested me, and oftentimes I would enjoy going to the bookstore to find something else to add to my large collection. I held a firm belief that somehow whatever book God wanted me to have, I would find. And interestingly enough, much more often than not, I actually would end up with a book that would quench the aforementioned thirst, and then some.

So, on this one particular occasion, as I rushed through the Barnes and Nobles in Coral Gables during my lunch time at work, one peculiar book caught my attention from the corner of my eye. It was a book with a half red and half black cover, and it dealt with the subject of Hoodoo. “Ok, let me see what this is all about,” I thought to myself, as I grinningly thought of the feeble attempt made at me with a brew just a week before. And I eventually breezed through the book swiftly, as I still do when compelled. I must admit it was quite a revelation for me at the time to find that Hoodoo actually deals mainly with the powers of thought and intentions. Being a dedicated fan of psychology, this subject captivated me; and the next book I fished out just had to be about Vodou, as I yearned to dig deeper into the bizarre drink investigation.

I read about so many different kinds of spirits, deities, and entities that dealt with such varieties of things. And though it was all new to me, I did not feel repelled, as I would have

predetermined. Instead, I found it all quite interesting; these beings which had been so demonized in movies, churches, and stereotypes really did not seem anything bad to me at all, as a matter of fact, they actually seemed benevolent, and their purposes, reasonable and honorable at that. To me, it appeared pretty obvious that most of the slandering concerning these beings could only be the result born of the tainted abuse by ill-intentioned misusers, as is quite common throughout societies worldwide.

I learned that there exists a deity named Elegua, lord of the crossroads. He is in charge of allowing or disallowing the communications between the heavens and Earth. He also tactfully controls chance. So, was it a coincidence that Elegua's colors are red and black, the same colors as the book on Hoodoo that was my first book on these subjects and which widened my interest in the field even further?

I was much acquainted with these colors, red and black. After all, my father had me singing songs about them as soon as I could speak; these were the colors of the flag of the Nicaraguan people's revolution, which eventually overthrew a corrupt dictatorship, which had lasted for generations. Dad was well involved in that. One of his colleagues once teared up as he looked me in the eyes and then pronounced: "Your father was one of Nicaragua's greatest anonymous heroes!".

Such gumption, I remember, that he had for his red and black flag; always making sure that his son was well informed of it's significance.



And so, Elegua, draped in this familiar red and black regalia, was pretty relatable to me, especially since he is also a trickster and a warrior with a personality that closely parallels that of one of my homeland's most infamous indigenous archetypes, "El Gueguense," on which Dad also apprised me well.

According to Baba Raul Canizares, this character, Elegua, "is considered the god of fate...His ability to facilitate one's aspirations, as well as being able to block them, makes him indispensable: Simply stated, without Elegua nothing can be accomplished!" (pg.2). Thus, naturally, in my next meditation I reached out to him and humbly asked him to open the doors for me.

Only six days later, my friend Shayaa gave me a call. "Remember Yismael?" he asked. "Yeah, what about him?". "He's been going to these things called 'Misas Espirituales (Spiritual Masses)' for about a year, and last Saturday he took me too," he informed.

I could not believe it. I had just recently read that "a Misa is called for to illuminate a spirit, spirit guide or a deceased relative, or because the spirits of the dead wish to relay a message to a person... [and they] are also performed on a regular basis to maintain an intimate contact with the spirits." (Ventos, pg.24). I also found out that they are the central ritual platform of Spiritualism; which is practiced (in varieties) as a foundational way to establish relationships with ancestors and guides within the many praxes that I had been reading about so much lately. The problem was that I had absolutely no clue of how to find such an event, or a venue hosting

one as such. But I *did* mention in my communication with Elegua that I hoped he could lead me to a Misa; and lo and behold, here it was! “Why didn’t you take me with you?” I asked passionately. “But that’s the reason I’m calling you,” he said, “We have been speaking so much about finding the ancestors, and I think this has something to do with that.... there’s a Misa this Saturday and....,” before he could finish I sort of excitedly yelped: “I’m there!”.

Saturday came and I went on my way to pick Shayaa up. He did not know the street address, but he knew how to get there; I followed his instructions attentively as we went on our way. “Make a right here,” “make a left there,” and so forth, he directed, as I drove happily growing more and more enthused about getting there. “We are almost there,” he proclaimed, and at that moment I kind of suspiciously squinted my eyes, assured that these places looked very familiar to me. “Right there!”, he exclaimed to my mesmerization.... This was a place that I had delivered mail to on a daily basis while stationed at a post office in that area a year earlier! It was a Santeria “botanica” shop, with, out of all names, the name “BOTANICA ELEGUA”!

I waited my turn to greet the lady in charge, whom everyone was referring to as “Godmother,” after the Misa to tell her that I would be back for the next Misa; her words seemed to strike a chord in me when I heard her say, “If God is willing!”. I could not help but wonder if she was saying that because my father may have inspired her to; after all, she sure did transmit many other messages from the spirit world to other people during the Misa. This lady was tapped into something profound without a doubt; and for the next few weeks I made sure to make the long journey to the Misas at the Botanica Elegua. Each time, I would simply sit, meditate, and

observe, study, and make my own attempts to rationalize the things that I was witnessing, such as possessions, mediumship, cleansings, and exorcisms. During this, I could not help but also learn from the benevolent advises given by the spirits and mediums that were present, all the while enjoying the awe-striking sounds of the many African drums being played all throughout. People would be randomly chosen to come up and get the readings or cleansings, or even to be walked up to and advised by spirits, but I was not, and I did not mind. It did not deter me from coming back. I patiently figured it just wasn't my time yet.

About a month later, my cousin Carmen came to Miami to stay with me in my apartment for a few days. She had brought her mom, my aunt Ana, who is my father's sister, as they were on their way to Orlando. When the next Saturday approached, I tried to think of an excuse to be able to slip away for the next Misa. I had it all set up, and I do not remember exactly how it happened, though my guess is that perhaps she was prompted by my all-white outfit, but the fact-of-the-matter is that my aunt was on to me somehow. She knew exactly where I was going!

"When I went to Cuba, as the National Director of Nicaraguan ballet, I was taken to a Misa," she confided. To my surprise, she told me that she would like to come with me, and of course, I did not object.

I really couldn't believe it. All of my close family members were devout Catholics, and such things as Misas are absolutely forbidden by the church. And even though aunt Ana was also Catholic, she still maintained a pretty open mind about all things. To me it was a real relief to have someone in the family to open up to about the things I had learned. I was very much

delighted about her tagging along. In a way I felt like, through her, I was getting some kind of blessing from my ancestors. And what she told me on the way there just shocked me:

“When I was there at the Misa in Cuba, the lady got possessed by your father...and I know it was him...the way he stood...he even did his mouth the same way your dad used to do...and the way he spoke...the menacing way he tried to playfully instigate me..he said that he was disappointed that you guys sold the house, but then he said he understood...he said he’s ok”.

Just floored, I thought to myself, “Certainly if my father’s spirit showed up at a Misa, then it must be okay, I must be on the right track..perhaps he has led me here!”.

That night, with my aunt sitting there with me, I was called up for the first time for a reading and a cleansing; it was time, and I felt right at home.



Me and my father, proudly wearing his red and black shirt while visiting the “Plaza of the Revolution” (Managua, Nicaragua 1979).



That's me in the middle, next to Shayaa in the green shirt, at the Botanica Elegua during a celebration for our spirits (Miami, Fl., 2002).



“Elegua” artwork by myself (©Isaac Sierra III, 2014).



*“I hope I can live up to my ancestors’ expectations of me, because I really believe that I have a duty to all those who have come before me”*

*— Assata Shakur*

Today, it has been over 22 years since my father’s transformation into the spirit world. I have now had about 14 years of experience in Misas, and as it turns out, that “Nicaraguan Indian” that he used to tell me about has been revealed in time to be my personal spirit guide. And there have just been a countless amount of things that he basically prophesied to me and I witnessed with amazement time and time again. The roads I have walked also led me to eventually becoming initiated into the Lukumi tradition, which is a branch extended and descended mainly from the Yoruba people in Nigeria onto the African diaspora in the Americas. According to Julio Garcia Cortez, “The slaves brought to the Caribbean spoke an immense variety of languages and dialects. The most popular was Yoruba, followed by Anago, Mandingo, Carabali, Fon, and few minority dialects. Their mixture in Cuba, gave birth to what was called by the Negroes ‘Lokumi’. This variant of the Yoruba language is still spoken today in the rituals” (pg.20).

And so it was, that during my very own grand Lukumi ceremony, which was to me a gargantuan step in my life, my father clearly made his presence known without missing a beat; still, to the day, aiding me along my adventures.



To me, this just did nothing more than to add to the pile of reasons why there is absolutely no doubt in my mind, as I have received proofs after proofs, that my father has simply never left me. Sure, he has left me physically, and certainly he is not anchored to me wherever I may be, but he sure has found a way to visit me and help guide me towards my own maturation and progress. I have walked the steps, but he has helped to clear many paths for me and things have been made easier for me by simply following the evidences which he has helped to manifest before me. Every time that I have had any kind of faith-based doubt, the doubt has been shot down rather quickly. To the point that it becomes so obvious that I quite simply cannot deny the truth! It is because of this, in part, that I have developed an internal confidence and enthusiasm when it comes to my spiritual development and evolution. I know that everything that has happened to me in my life has had a purpose.

I can clearly recall the times, such as when my father went the way of all flesh, when I had my face down on the floor, crying my eyes out and feeling totally at a loss for any kind of physical strength; but yet somehow, in the profundity of this obscure and lonesome moment, I could perceive some type of enclosed voice within me revealing that there was a reason for it all. Influencing me to absorb the pain and remember it and gain strength from it so that perhaps one day I could help others who may at some point feel the same way. This same voice would tell me to get up and stand sturdily. That my experience would become a metamorphosis for me. And though I may not have understood it clearly at the time, I believed it because I simply recognized it as truth! That voice has always been there for me during the toughest of times ever since that day, and perhaps it has been the voice of my father that has spoken to me on such occasions. I

deem it to be highly probable.

But regardless of whose voice it has been, I would bet that my father has at least had a hand in the process of such communication. He always believed in me and surely he still does. I hope to make him proud and wish not to waste his efforts. It is, however, a totally empowering sensation to know for certain that I have help that I can draw upon, and I feel a sense of responsibility within me to ensure that this gift will never go in vain.

***“I was born by myself but carry the spirit and blood of my father, mother and my ancestors. So I am really never alone.”***

**— Ziggy Marley**

There is a saying in the Lukumi tradition which states: “The Dead give birth to the Saint” (Ochoa, pg.36). The meaning of this is that once one is able to construct a foundation with the ancestors, which ultimately means with one’s true self, one’s true roots and core, then the force of this base can stand the elevation of the soul into a higher plane.

In this tradition it is commonly accepted that the spirits are easily accessible to anyone, as the spirit world is simply a part of nature; and Caribbean Spiritualism is a tool put into practice to attain this infrastructural bedrock. “Caribbean Spiritualism, is in many ways different from its European counterpart. Sometimes called Espiritismo or in very Africanized forms Espiritismo Cruzado, it inherited many influences from African and Amerindian cultures. Espiritismo has never had a single leader or epicenter of practice, and as such its practice varies greatly between individuals and groups. In all cases, Espiritismo has absorbed various practices from other religious and spiritual practices endemic to Latin America and the Caribbean, such as Roman Catholicism, Curanderismo (traditional, Latin American folk healing), Santeria, Palo, and Vodou” (Ventos, pg.14). One interested in Espiritismo would be wise to begin by establishing the basics by way of setting up a spirit altar which is referred to as a “Boveda”:

“The practice of Espiritismo is centered around a special altar or shrine, called ‘Boveda Espiritual’... This shrine functions as a place where people go to ‘salute’ the spirits and to commune with their guides on a daily basis. As each and every person has different spirit guides (who are, put together as a group, called Spiritual Court), it is only natural to see slight variations in individual Bovedas” (Ventos, pg.16).

The most common Boveda set up consists of seven clear glasses of water (one in the middle and three from front to back on each side) on top of a white cloth on a table. One then may put a crucifix in front and center of the arrangement, along with flowers and white candles on both sides of the table (some people prefer to place the crucifix inside the middle glass or behind it). Then, one may put photos of ancestors or loved ones behind the set altar. If photos are not available or desired, then they may be replaced with objects that might represent the spirits.

It is believed that with the regular use of the Boveda, one can commence the establishment of his or her communication with the spirits. They will use the energy of the water to ground and cleanse themselves and the environment of the devotee; along with the devotee him/herself also. With patience and commitment, the devotee will in time develop his or her own mediumship and/or his or her bond and understanding with the spirits that take interest over him or her.



Typical "Spiritual Boveda" set up.

Once one's bond with his or her ancestors and spirit guides has blossomed sufficiently, it can be said that one has attained a befitting foundation that will likely lead to an inevitable transmogrification which the spirits will lead the devotee through. For the Lukumi, this would be the Orisha initiation, which is also known as "crowning," or "making saint". This is a ceremony that elevates the devotee into the status of a priest or priestess by having him or her become one with his or her guardian angel and charging him or her with the duty and responsibility of receiving and taking care of this guardian angel along with other angels of sort, known in Yoruba as "Orishas". But it also goes much deeper: "Orishas can also be viewed as subtle vibrations in the physiology, which directly influence the flow of vital energy" (Sawandi, pg.29). The ritual is actually nothing more than a process of profound diagnoses and treatments...

“The goal of Yorubic diagnosis is to get in touch with the interaction of your internal Orishas, with the rhythms of the universe, and with the spiritual forces which have their impact on the human Ashe, or essence. When you are able to bring your spirit and mind to that, and feel the flow of the internal Orishas, you are experiencing a re-alignment with universal One-ment” (Sawandi, pg.26).

The initiation, in part, becomes a quantum-psychosomatic influence upon the initiate’s head, or “Ori” in Yoruba, and is aimed towards the purification and positive modification of the web of communications between neurons within the brain. This is what neuroscience would refer to as neuroplasticity, which according to Wikipedia, “is widely recognized in healthy development, learning, memory, and recovery from brain damage” (Neuroplasticity, Wikipedia). And this is precisely what the initiation accomplishes as “the initiate undergoes a series of holistic therapeutic processes which include phytotherapy, soundtherapy, and chromotherapy” (Pulido, *video*).

According to Professor Luciano Pulido, who is a Holistic Health expert and a Yoruba Theologian, “These therapies labor in conjunction, corresponding with each of the Orishas and their particular frequencies and are joined with psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, and divination to diagnose, decode, and detect the unbalanced frequencies in order to subconsciously reprogram them by way of repetition and practice in everyday conduct as instructed by the Orishas and to emit new frequencies in a healthy manner in order to biologically restructure the toxic thoughts, emotions, and conducts that are not beneficial towards health and prosperity” (*video*). In many

ways, the initiate is born again not only spiritually, but also scientifically indeed; making this a vital step in the process of the complete development of any devotee. But it would simply be impossible to attain this degree of growth without first having the consent of the spirits and ancestors. They are with the initiate through every step of the way; because in fact, none of the ceremonial steps are ever taken without affirming their blessings before anything else is done.

Having undergone this Lukumi initiation, I couldn't sufficiently emphasize how gravely I was first and foremost guided there by my spirits. Clueless at the time of how I would even acquire the funds to proceed with this expensive initiation which the spirits were demanding that I do (by way of oracles, etc.), I was still eventually happily able to cover the required expenses. This is because I was aided very punctually by none other than my father's mother, who before she died one year earlier, had instructed his sister to collect from the rental of her house and send it to me. Having no clue of this, I was just thrown aback and awestruck when my aunt called to inform me that she was complying with my grandmother's wishes and sending this one last gift from her!

Coincidentally, this dear grandmother also made her presence known during the ceremonies, moving some mediums to tears as they saw her put her arms around me and say: "You are not alone!".

***“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.”***

***— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.***

My advice to anyone who might have the tough task of enduring through the death of an endeared person would be for him or her to recognize that the lost one has not really been lost, but has instead been transmuted. I firmly hold the belief that though physically losing a beloved one is not easy by any stretch of the imagination, it is however a passage that can possibly aid in the connection with a world from beyond. I would support the survivor wholeheartedly by way of aiding him or her at focusing in on feeding this potential link by paying homage and respect to the dearly departed. If one does this, the loved one could receive the thoughts and intentions and be fueled by them in a positive manner. In turn, the spirit may actually reciprocate in some sort of way; forming a mutual alliance that may become a way for the individual and the loved one to continue their former bond anew.

Moreover, as I have come to find out, this interconnection that begins with a loved one can open the gates to many other ancestors who also travel along with us and take interest in us on our distinct journeys. Ancestral homage holds within it the possibility of better self-understanding for us. If truth be told, these ancestors not only are ingredients in our pedigree, but are also profound componential parts of our psyche and character. In understanding them and connecting with them, we are truly understanding and connecting with ourselves; or an elevated part of us that reaches past our terrestrial existence and intertwines us with a higher generative force.



Truly, none of us are ever really in complete solitude. There are whole intangible dimensions that might be invisible to the untrained eye, but are nevertheless real, still. All we have to do is tap into them for us to begin to see how palpable these realms can be to any of us. It could be considered kind of akin to the way the we are blind to all the microorganisms which reside within and even on us; but once we use a tool such as a microscope, we then can easily perceive and bare witness to what we could not before. It is this way with our own spirits and ancestors, they walk with us perpetually whether recognized or not; and all it really takes is for us to develop the spiritual scope needed to realize that we have available, reachable resources that we could easily tune into and bare fruit from at any moment. From my transformational experiences, I can personally make the guarantee to anyone that they too could encounter the benefits of a special and unique interrelationship with kindred souls which more than likely await him or her fondly within their attainable sphere. The only simple requirements in order to be able to achieve this are just a pinch of awareness, a drop of dedication, a teaspoon of effort, and a big cup of pure, motivated faith.



“Homage” artwork by myself (©Isaac Sierra III, 2014).

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