

Remembering the Legacy of our Fathers, What a gift!

When ever I return home, to South and Africa and London, I hear more stories and see more photos of my father, I am thrilled to learn more about him. A plethora of mixed emotions that makes me sad (because there was much I did not know and joyful because I discover more about him each time) He died in Spain, when I was 24 years old on the way back to England and on the way to my wedding. Recently I found out about his activism as a young man it filled me with joy as I had found a connection to him. He died of a heart attack but I believe it was a broken heart having to leave his homeland South Africa and all his family.

I mention this as it is all part of his history that shaped who he was and I know it has shaped who I am today. Part of what I do is to help people to heal what I am calling the wounds of ancestral legacy. That which shaped our mothers and fathers, their fathers, grandfathers and ultimately us, how we show up today.

I am well aware that not everyone has good memories of their father or may not even want to remember him, and so when Father's Day comes along it may be hard for some. What has been helpful is to be curious about this man who gave us life, who is a part of us, and to also discover what it was like for him growing up, which may have contributed to how he showed up as your father. With whom, can or could he, the father, share his wound when the messages often received as kids were "big boys do not cry" and continuing into adulthood, "the man of the house is expected to provide". Often this can be transformed into disciplinarian or authoritarian abusive, and a completely dysfunctional use of power or it can be seen as if we don't do that we are weak.

Fathers who leave other than divorce, and it seems statically to be more than mothers, are often left in our memories as Superman or we stay mad at them or worse still we blame ourselves for their behavior and constantly look for validation from other men who come into our life.

My experience was confusing. Knowing I was loved and Daddy's little girl (the only girl in the family) yet my Father did not know how to express his love. When I heard the stories of his family growing up I understood why and could forgive. You may not be able to forgive, and some may have amazing wonderful fathers. I can only imagine it is a huge responsibility to take care of and provide for a family for years, often having to give up dreams.

The father wound cuts deep for daughters and sons as it does not necessarily hold the notion of unconditional love as the mother is supposed to represent. We are constantly looking for validation, a role model and someone to be proud of, who is seen as strong and when he fails in one or all it can be devastating and when he does not see our gifts, it can wound us for life. What ever your experience of your father, alive or passed I invite you to "find the blessing alongside the wound" Michael Meade. **Generally** I feel men and Fathers get a bad rap in this society (I hear the screams from some women as I write this) but when I have sat in San Quentin and heard the men's

stories or when I hear the stories of people's fathers and grandfathers actions in divination it reminds me that we ALL have a story and that whilst we gain strength and resilience from those who came before us, we are also impacted by what went down with them, and maybe no one bothered to take the time to listen to their stories, of how they have been shaped by their fathers.

So dead or alive try to find out the stories of your father, and their fathers. Make a book of his life, so easy to do these days. To honor even if we may not be able to forgive may seem hard yet deeply liberating. Words like loyal, devoted, loving yet unable to express it, sacrificing, teachers, hardworkers come to mind. Everyday is a time to remember but fortunately we are reminded once a year.

So for those who have father's in the ancestral realm. A wonderful ritual is to find out about your father's story. Find photos, put them on an alter, speak to him daily ask him for what you want, ask him to help you.

Create a Clay figurine which in the Dagara tradition is called a Sankuma (SAN- father grandfather) Simply shape the figurine how ever it calls you. Use a spirit like Vodka which does not smell, "spirit for the spirits" instead of water to keep the clay moist, decorate it, place something in the base to remember him and cover it over with clay. When it is dry sprinkle with wood ash from a fire for protection and place on an alter or shrine. This represents the father figure in your life. Speak to him everyday ask for what you want and give him the opportunity to say his sorry. When we bring peace and reconciliation to unfinished business in the ancestral realm we bring healing to ourselves. What a gift!!!