

PRAYER FOR HEALING

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Friday May 23, 2014, University of California, Santa Barbara. Attended a three-hour-long talk on historical trauma, led by Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart.

That afternoon I went to work at a café

Couldn't really focus

Listened to music

Did some mindless work

Responded to emails, maybe

I started feeling pain

on the left side of my stomach

then on the right side too

I ignored it and kept working

Got up and the pain grew as I walked

I started to worry

What is this pain?

It's Friday evening

I can't go to student health

I don't want to go to the ER

It's too expensive

I got home and started making dinner

My friend texted me:

“Hey u ok? Drive by shooting in IV just now ”

“What?! I’m home, I’m safe”

I took a look on Facebook

Numerous posts warning

People to stay inside,

There was a shooting

No warning text or email from the university yet

My desensitized mind thought

“It’s probably another ‘TV crime’¹

. . . how unfortunate”

More Facebook posts and articles

Four dead bodies,

Several more wounded

This was not “just another crime in IV”

The pain on the side of

my stomach became stronger

I couldn’t stand anymore

I had to sit down

I remembered the following morning was the

Womyn of Color conference,

organized by undergraduate students at UCSB

Three friends and colleagues and I were

facilitating a workshop that day on healing

There were now seven dead bodies,
including the killer
And thirteen wounded
An entire community traumatized

A tear or two rolled down my cheek
when in one of those articles I read
a comment from a student describing how
they saw the shooting from their balcony

The day of the conference
I drove to campus
The day was grey and I felt fear

The pain on the side of my stomach was still there
But I couldn't feel it as much anymore

I was going numb
I was feeling slow
Not able to react
Zoned out
I felt my emotions stuck in my skin
Unable to come out and manifest themselves
I was not in Isla Vista when it happened
I don't live in Isla Vista
I don't know any of the people who
died or who were injured
Yet, the shock was real
I suppose that's what triggering events do

I could feel it in all of my body
The tension, the fear, the anger

My stomach was in less pain
I don't know if I went completely numb
If the pain went away
If it was trying to tell me something
If it was trying to tell me that
something painful was about to happen and happening
I will never know

I pray for everyone's healing
I pray that we are able to grieve and mourn
I pray for those who are no longer with us
for those who are healing at the hospital
for those who lost their friends and family members
for the immigrant families who became
invisibilized once again in these tragic events
and who have to re-live trauma every time a tragedy happens in IV

I pray to my ancestors. I pray.

¹ IV: Isla Vista. IV is a community right next to the University of California, Santa Barbara, where most undergraduate students live. Many immigrant families live there too.