

Advice from La Llorona

By Deborah A. Miranda

—a found poem

Each grief has its unique side.
 Choose the one that appeals to you.
 Go gently.
 Your body needs energy to repair the amputation.
 Humor phantom pain.

Your brain cells are soaked with salt;
 connections fail unexpectedly and often.
 Ask for help.
 Accept help.

Read your grief like the daily newspaper:
 headlines may have information you need.
 Scream. Drop-kick the garbage can across the street.

Don't feel guilty if you have a good time.
 Don't act as if you haven't been hit by a Mack Truck.
 Do things a little differently
 but don't make a lot of changes.
 Revel in contradiction.

Talk to the person who died.
 Give her a piece of your mind.

Try to touch someone at least once a day.
 Approach grief with determination.
 Pretend the finish line doesn't keep receding.
 Lean into the pain.
 You can't outrun it.

Notes:

The epigraph of this poem was originally omitted in the changeover to the new website. Because of this, reciting the epigraph is optional for the 2019-2020 Poetry Out Loud season.

Deborah A. Miranda, "Advice from La Llorona" from *The Zen of La Llorona*. Copyright © 2005 by Deborah A. Miranda. Reprinted by permission of Salt Publishing.

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An enrolled member of the Ohlone-Costanoan Esselen Nation of California, poet Deborah Miranda was born in Los Angeles to an Esselen/Chumash father and a mother of French ancestry. She grew up in Washington State, earning a BS in teaching moderate special-needs children from Wheelock College in 1983 and an MA and PhD in English from the University of Washington. Miranda's poetry is informed by her mixed-blood ancestry and knowledge of the natural world. Often focused around gender, her poetry treats topics such as mothering and the ability to nurture in a violent world. She teaches English at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia.

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