



CHAPTER 8

In my Mother's Kitchen: Spirituality and Decolonization

Janelle Brady

Only my grandmother understood
Only my grandmother understood how connected I felt once again
Only my grandmother understood what being in that kitchen meant
Only my grandmother understood that I was stepping into a spiritual realm
Finding connection to what was lost on this earth, in this life, by being in
the kitchen and reaching out to the person I love again
Only my grandmother understood

Washing chicken and vegetables
My hands hold the memory which was passed down from my ancestors
My connection to these memories came from my mother, my aunts and my
grandmothers

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I washed away tried to reclaim and understand her pain
 I washed away with rejuvenation, understanding the sacredness of her gift to
 me, life
 I washed away again and again

I peeled and felt connected to my mother's struggle
 Her struggle in the face of anti-Black racism
 Her struggle in the face of patriarchy
 Her struggle in the face of white supremacy
 Her struggle in raising me
 Her struggle in a world expecting her to be a strong, Black woman and what
 that meant
 I peeled away knowing this was not a single story

I peeled and unraveled years of intergenerational trauma
 Trauma passed down to Black mothers
 I peeled away and chopped, understanding, but not fully
 Knowing, but not with mastery,
 Instead with a humility of accepting what I do not know
 I remembered her words to me in the kitchen to "Move yuh hand fast" and
 how we would laugh
 We would laugh because it was comical, but true, no time to delay, and as
 she would say, you need to "cut n go tru"
 Our race and gendered realities do not allow for us to sit back and wait
 We cannot wait for privileges and systems of warmth and welcome
 Built on Others, othering, and people lives devalued, expendable and lost at
 all cost
 To uphold a system that claims to built by those who fought or earned their
 place
 I peeled away

I prepared and tasted
 I remembered that we need to foster resistance through sisterhood, mother-
 hood, friendships and our ancestors
 I remembered her trying
 I remembered she said "Everyday that we are living, we are dying"
 She resisted in every aspect she could and challenged me to resist and live a
 life that she would
 I prepared and tasted

My hands never held such strength
I do not owe this to my own-doing or merit
I understand, that I do not understand everything, but I understand this
comes from years and generations of preparation
Preparation which I do and do not understand
I understand the life-long process and how she'd say, we're all "a work in
progress"
I understand that we must learn to unlearn, continue to resist and insist
Together by building solidarities we did not know exist

She was my messenger, my mentor and friend
She continues to guide me to the end
Holding her strength in my hands
I wash away, peel away, prepare and taste
Most importantly I serve
Reclaiming a realm I cannot understand
She guides me and puts strength in my hands
But on this journey to reclaim that which is now lost, only my grandmother
understood the tears behind that sauce