

LORENA SAAVEDRA SMITH

AWAKEN YOUR ROOTS

Reclaim Your Ancestry and Sovereignty
by Heeding the Jaguar's Call

 **sounds true**
BOULDER, COLORADO

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FOREWORD

May a Thousand Roots Awaken!

This is a book written with the wisdom of a woman who could very well be the voice of the Universal Mother. As its title expresses, it is a summons, and almost a warning, to awaken the roots that connect us to the vital force of our origin and the meaning of our existence. It is, indeed, a call that comes from telluric, volitional powers to which we must respond in order to recover our indestructible alliance with the transcendent DNA of the primordial light.

Lorena del Pilar Saavedra de Smith unfolds her reflections and proposals from the honesty of her own life. Her own experiences allow her to explore the human psyche and spirit with the utmost honesty, aware of the cultural disruptions to which we human beings are exposed in a world facing the challenges of globalization and a civilizational crisis.

It is not unusual, but rather an endemic phenomenon, that a large portion of humanity is afflicted by feelings of estrangement, uncertainty, and loss of self-control in contexts where loneliness, exclusion, and abandonment conspire against personal and collective identity, as well as against the integrity of the human being.

I see the new awakening as a reenactment of the primordial animating act of our species and its rooting in maternal soil. When we transplant a pine or alder tree, we don't expect it to stop being a pine

or an alder, but rather to adapt to the environment that will host it. Similarly, when faced with different conditions, people shouldn't have to stop being who they are, but rather call into action all our capacities for biological and cultural adaptation and resilience to thrive both physically and psychologically. There is something ritualistic and enchanting about this "re-planting" that I sympathetically appreciate, given the logic it follows, the systematic way the model was developed, and above all, because of the intuitive, affective, and evocative components it rescues, as if to highlight the fabric of the lineages that will always sustain our sovereignty and restore healthy balance. Our constant concern should be not only to spread and expand freely throughout the world, but to establish ourselves with the best possible chances of success, development, and affirmation of our potential. In this way, we can all contribute to building a better world.

A woman who survived the terror prevalent in a society in turmoil and at war knows that the task of overcoming trauma confronts one with circumstances and events that make it difficult or impossible to find a reliable path to healing. Each person's emotional wounds require specific medication, appropriate and effective therapy. In many cases, refuge within a community of parishioners is merely a temporary palliative. The same is true of many healing procedures, which generate contradictions that cannot be ignored. However, the difficult harvest of experiences allows us to ascertain certain components of invaluable effectiveness, such as proving that to breathe is to live. If we breathe, it's because we are here. It's new to me to know that there are dangers in the search for reinforcements that provide stable security within the body through introspection, but it's encouraging to discover that the desired place can be found within ourselves. This is achieved by Lorena, whose encounter and confrontation with the archetypal figure of the jaguar, or *otorongo*, was the threshold to new and broad possibilities of personal affirmation.

I find that the author's account of her experiences goes far beyond the anecdotal and merely motivational, becoming the basis of an instructive methodology. It is essential for anyone interested and engaged in a similar quest to question their own situation in order to gather a scattered

memory and examine the superficial layers of consciousness. It is natural for the spiritual teacher or guide to consider the cultural differences of each pilgrim. Above all, it is important to consider that, in each case, we are faced with a person whose dignity deserves all the due consideration, and this cannot be achieved through pretense.

The inner war within ourselves demands an essential reconciliation for overcoming any trauma and the subsequent reconnection with our essential selves. On this path, Lorena has achieved such reconciliation. Moreover, it is achieved through the recovery of practices of physical, mental, and spiritual union within its own traditions, which I understand to be Andean and originating from the continent fundamentally, and the results of this invaluable effort are what she now shares with us.

A primary question is: How do we connect with the exquisite architecture of nature? The answer is positioned within a philosophical framework of the Andean *Pacha* and the concept of *nuna*, conceived as a set of aspects that embody different roles. How can we make the body safe for the return of the spirit or *nuna* when the being has been split? This is another question addressed in close connection with the traditional worldview to which these categories belong. These and other questions are the subject of an enculturated treatment that simultaneously addresses the requirements of the aforementioned re-planting, with a notable concern for freeing the mind from all demonization that has historically affected ancestral thought. A transactional practice with the bearers of the ancient wisdom preserved by the living cultures of the Andes shapes the seriousness of this therapeutic and, in a sense, initiatory proposal. Mastery emanates from entities of power whose physical manifestations can take diverse and perhaps unsuspected forms. The idea is to be prepared to face the jaguar when it is time to answer its call. When this happens, the necessary emotional autonomy has been achieved.

The author of this book has made an important contribution to achieving a healthy balance within societies shaken by the impact of modernity, industrial revolutions, and the growing hegemony of information technology, along with the cognitive biases they give rise to.

As an anthropologist, dedicated for years to the study of symbolic structures in the Andes and to the need to make contributions to a *tinku*, or intercultural philosophical dialogue, between Western and Andean thought, I predict an auspicious path for this message, full of conviction and faith in a future without ethnic, gender, economic, or any other exclusions. *May a thousand roots awaken!*

Chorrillos-Lima, April 2025

Dr. Rodolfo Sánchez Garrafa

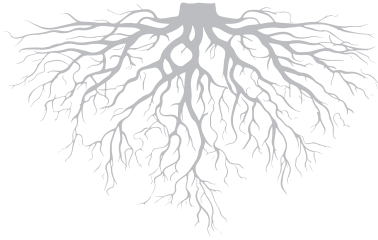
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INTRODUCTION



Who Am I?

I am a ray of sun with a pinch of darkness
I am the disoriented wind unleashing moods
I am the sweet waters of rivers following a path
I am the tireless ocean benefactor of life
I am the fire of a forgotten mountain
I am moist soil where the seeds rest
I am the grain that makes the crops
I am the rainbow that bridges the unknown of darkness
to the prismatic rainforest and all above
I am part goddess, part priest
I am the one who weaves sorrows and joys into a tapestry
and uses it as a blanket to nurse unseen wounds
I am her
I am a mother breastfeeding dreams
I am a sister holding pillars of sanctuaries
I am a wife rowing against the stream
I am a grandmother with overflowing secrets
I am
I am her
I am here

I started running because I sensed that I needed to do what I could to be in my body, to feel my vitality coursing through my veins. As I ran, I often had a vision of a jaguar chasing me, and I was able to connect with its energy. But a year ago, I had a powerful breakthrough. This time, I was prompted to ask myself: “Why am I running?”

In other words, *what* was I running from?

Modern psychology uses the metaphor of running from a tiger or another wild beast in its description of the fight/flight/freeze response. This metaphor sets up a relationship with Nature that turns it into the enemy. We assume that Nature is fraught with danger and obstacles—that we must do what we can to survive. Over time, this fear-based idea has led to the belief that the only way to be in relationship with Nature—with its unpredictable creatures and chaotic forces—is to outwit it . . . perhaps even by using violence or cunning. This fear-based mandate has shaped the way we relate to Nature and one another.

However, during that run, I had a beautiful epiphany. I realized that the jaguar was not chasing me so it could tear me to pieces. Instead, it was at my heels, imploring me to stop. It was saying, “Don’t be afraid. I’m not here to harm you. I’m here to show you how to become one with me.”

I realized that the jaguar was showing me how to face my fear with courage and determination—not by pushing through it or going around it or keeping it at a distance.

The jaguar, like the puma in the Andes, is a powerful symbol of courage and purpose across many Mesoamerican and South American cultures.

I was blessed to encounter it, for it was giving me a way to shift out of survival mode—a way of being that has proven to be harmful to our planet—and to lovingly embody liberation.

This is the principle at the core of the book you hold in your hands, *Awaken Your Roots: Reclaim Your Ancestry and Sovereignty by Heeding the Jaguar's Call*.

I wrote this book out of a desire to reclaim agency and purpose—especially from societal forces that have caused me to feel deficient, inadequate, and invisible over the years—through ancestral wisdom and a rightful relationship with Nature. The tools I've rediscovered in the ancient healing practices from my culture proved to be powerful medicine—especially for those like me: highly intuitive souls who long to deepen into their roots.

My life story includes navigating the challenges of becoming a naturalized United States citizen—but my cross-cultural journey is not my whole story. My roots are Indigenous and mixed race (*mestiza*), and I'm also a multidisciplinary Pacha philosopher. *Pacha* is a Quechua word—one of the languages of the Indigenous peoples of Perú—that encompasses everything related to Nature: time, space, and all forms of matter and energy, in all cardinal directions. Wherever you were born, and whether you identify as a migrant to the lands you find yourself in or not, we are living in a time when it's imperative for us to reconnect with who we are. Most of us have been impacted by many intersecting forms of societal sidelining, and I know that ancestral wisdom can reconnect all of us with who we truly are. It's time for us to heal, and to forge a sacred contract with Nature and all of life.

I wrote *Awaken Your Roots* for all of you who are in the tender process of rediscovering your essence and awakening to the power of sacred reciprocity, interconnectedness, and being in a living dialogue with Nature and creation. I wrote it with women like me in mind, as we are accustomed to “code-switching” for the sake of assimilating into a world that asks us to cut off entire aspects of who we are in order to survive and belong. However, anyone who has ever felt disconnected from their core essence can find solace in the words within. Throughout this book, I will

use gendered terms: men, women, male, female, mother, father. I invite you to bring your own meaning to these terms, and to embrace whatever identities resonate with you.

As you read these pages, I invite you into a new, rooted belonging—one that gently asks you to reclaim everything that may have previously been a source of pain (especially the complex song of your heritage, your language, and the song of your ancestors' ways that still lives through you, though the notes may be faint). The path of reclaiming who we are and reconnecting to Nature is a long one, so this book offers ways to honor and care for yourself that go beyond the methods of today's wellness industrial complex and its well-meaning but often thoughtless appropriation of various cultural contexts.

You will be coaxed to bring into the light the parts of your personal and collective history that have been suppressed. You will be asked to sit with subjects that may be uncomfortable or painful, including trauma, infertility, violence, abuse, immigration, and the colonial legacy, and to care for yourself however you need as you face these topics with courage and sweetness. You will also discover your own medicine (which is often hiding inside your wounds, as I learned firsthand) and use it to heal yourself and be of service to the world. But first, you must be willing to find peace inside your own unhealed heart, and to acknowledge the ways that being physically and metaphorically severed from your roots has hurt you.

WE ARE MEANT TO HEAL

For so many migrants and foreign-born, the struggle to keep up while ensuring that we're a step ahead, so as to be taken seriously by the society in which we have been re-planted, can be exhausting. My mother often told me and my siblings that we had to do our best to catch up because our culture was fifty years behind Eurocentric cultures. Our ways of knowing were considered primitive and uncivilized, and we were programmed with the idea that we had to remain ahead of the curve in order to prove ourselves.

Such are the wounds of colonialism, which we are learning to unravel as we recognize that many Indigenous, non-European, and older European cultures are the holders of knowledge and wisdom connected to earth science, astronomy, medicine, healing, and other modalities that are starting to be reclaimed. Sadly, it's a slow process, as colonizing cultures stripped the civilizations they occupied of a clear sense of connection to their heritage, and we see the results of this across the world today.

Throughout the world, especially in “developed” Western countries, people spend millions of dollars on wellness products, courses, and workshops. Yet, methods for healing remain elusive to those who most need it: economically disadvantaged people and those who continue to linger on the margins of society. As this book will uncover, the implications of this are far-reaching. In a world that is beset by intergenerational trauma, an aspect of economic exploitation and historical injustice, individual healing can take us far—but until it is connected to the collective goal of overall wellness for all the beings of the world, it will only ever be for the fortunate few, while the rest stay in survival mode.

To that end, I also intend for *Awaken Your Roots* to serve as a wake-up call to researchers and practitioners whose work revolves around the power of ancestral medicine as a tool for wellness. While many of the current voices in the field are well-meaning, it's important for us to turn a more critical eye to the ways in which entitlement and assumption continue to deplete our so-called wisdom traditions. By burying the voices of the men, women, and two-spirits who have been the wisdom keepers of so many traditions that were nearly decimated and who continue to bear the wounds of these forces today, many in the wellness and spirituality world perpetuate an unacknowledged spiritual colonialism.

I hope for this book to offer a healing remedy, and to give guidance onto a different path. And to those of you who have often felt you didn't belong, I hope to resuscitate the voices of all our ancestors who were silenced. This book will be a compassionate guide that will provide ways to soothe the emotional distress that is the result of the wounds of surviving in a world that was not meant for our thriving. As *Awaken Your Roots* shares, we are the ones we've been waiting for, and our ancestors

live in and through us. When we access their wisdom, we discover what we need to flourish and to create a world that is deserving of us.

THE INFLUENCE OF SACRED RECIPROCITY

Thankfully, there is a way out of surviving and into flourishing. The wisdom we hold is wisdom we carry in our bones, in the songs of our mother tongue, in the vibrant dirt of our birthlands, in the delicious foods our ancestors cooked, in our cleansing tears, in our bodies—which are vessels for the knowledge and traditions our ancestors lovingly passed on through the millennia. Although this knowledge is not often valued by mainstream society, it is the most important knowledge we can cultivate. It is time-honored, empirical, and rooted in our lived experiences and our very DNA.

Many of us are awakening to the potency of the ways and wisdom of our ancestors. Many of us are awakening to the beauty of our cultural traditions. At the same time, we cannot make the mistake of romanticizing ancestral work; reconciliation with our roots can only happen because something got broken! This means that ancestral work can be *painful*—whether the people in our lineages were victims or perpetrators. Often, for many of us, it's a combination of both. We must approach healing with care and compassion. Sometimes, we may not be ready to put the pieces of our family tree back together, and that's okay.

Please know that this book won't go into elaborate or prescribed rituals and ceremonies, as I am not interested in appropriating aspects of my culture. Here's the good news, though: nourishment is close at hand. The vast majority of Indigenous cultures have one root base, and that's Nature. In Andean philosophy and religion, connecting with Nature from a nonextractive, nonexploitative perspective—with reciprocity and respect—allows us to be in the right relationship with the Earth and with ourselves. Nature is the grandmother who records the history of our pain and our triumph, so we can always connect with it when we need to heal our wounds and when we require more strength to embrace our roots.

This is how the Andean people sustained a vibrant and thriving culture—through something known in the Quechua language as *Sumaq*

Kawsay, or “living well.” Living well is a fundamental holistic philosophy that promotes maintaining balance and harmony with Nature in order to flourish. It encompasses the Andean people’s approach to social and communal life, economics, education, agriculture, science, the arts, and spirituality. This approach to collective well-being is often at odds with the individualistic mindset many of us in Western culture have become accustomed to—a mindset that promotes profit, commodification, growth over stability, and individual health over communal health. When we explore what it means to live well, we can find freedom and release from the phantoms of our wounding and finally do the work of creating the world we deserve.

If you’ve chosen to read this book now, it’s because you’ve been called. You know that you no longer have to endure your own self-destruction—which impacts every single one of us in the way it wrenches us from a supportive relationship with Nature. You don’t have to travel a thousand miles, using fuel to arrive at a place where someone will give you a magical elixir that will make you feel whole and restored. Healing can be found in your own backyard, in a restorative connection with Nature.

Reconnecting with Nature is the key to reconnecting with our roots and ancestry, overcoming adversity, and committing to healing the wounds of history. This will also enable us to step into more loving, respectful relationships with individuals and societies very different from us, without falling into the trap of othering, comparison, and conquest.

WEAVING A NEW AND ANCIENT WAY OF BEING

I’m an integrated therapist who has assisted hundreds of women in healing from challenging situations ranging from poverty, to abuse, to war, to an outright dismissal of who they really are by society at large. I have extended my heartfelt support to all of them, because I know what it’s like to experience self-erasure and to be unseen and unheard by others. Over the years, I discovered multiple disciplines that support the integration of wholeness—uniting our body, emotions, and thinking mind. All of these practices have been useful, but only to a point.

It was when I took a leap of faith and dove deep into the knowledge and companionship of Nature that I remembered the multidimensional, intergenerational knowledge that lives in my bones. It was through Nature that I became whole—by applying the ancestral medicine that was already in my DNA.

What I offer you in *Awaken Your Roots* is a path of courage, radical intimacy, and unapologetic truth. I provide multidisciplinary solutions and suggestions for finding your path to reconnect with the medicine you've always carried within you, but which has remained dormant and asleep under the spell of fear, trauma, grief, and pain. My wish is for you to be who you really are, so that you can embrace your gifts and unleash your medicine to heal yourself, your family, and your community. I will walk with you and let Nature and your ancestors guide me to be the best mirror and reflection I can be. As you walk this path, you not only reconcile with your roots and therefore heal yourself, you also contribute to the healing of all those who came before and all those who will come after you.

Throughout this book, the sleek and elegant jaguar will be our guide. The jaguar allows us to embody the sensate experience of being alive on this planet. Throughout what is now called Mesoamerica and South America, big cats like the jaguar and the puma represent power; in Pacha philosophy, they are the protectors of humanity as we walk in this realm of existence. In many ancestral traditions, when they arrive, it's a powerful sign of transformation. The one who encounters them is said not to be a regular human being but someone who has the potential to change the trajectory of their life. This is why I was so humbled when the jaguar showed up in my vision. Although I didn't know it then, it was initiating me into a vital aspect of my own life's work.

The medicine of this book is meant to attune you to this immense liberatory energy, so you can weave a new reality that is grounded in an ancient wisdom that will reverberate across past, present, and future. The concept of weaving is dear to me and to many Indigenous cultures. Rather than “building” or “constructing” a reality vertically, from the ground up, we weave horizontally in a collaborative relationship with