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Sound Healing Final Essay
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Using Music as a Path and the Art of Allowing

I am rolling around on public a dance floor, crying and laughing in ecstatic release: and I don't care. I am walking down a public street with my friends singing loudly- people are giving me strange looks: and I don't care. I am standing in front of 300 people at a wedding, singing my heart out: and I don't care. I am sitting in my sound healing class, making the noise of my day, and releasing the most terrible and obnoxious noises possible: and I don't care. And it's not that I don't care what I'm doing: I care very deeply. But I don't care what people are thinking, and I don't lose myself in fear of judgment. And when the fear slips in, because it inevitably does from time to time, instead of running away from that energy of being embarrassed or shamed I dive into it. I fully let myself feel the emotions of being embarrassed or the fear of being judged, and I let it move through my body. I use the energy. I grow with the fear.

It is 2009 and I am lying on the couch in my Life Coaches living room, for the first time exploring the depths of my shadow. I had lived my entire life under a blanket of shame, of embarrassment, of fear of judgment, of hiding out from life. All I wanted was to be free- to allow myself to say the things I wanted to say and do what I wanted to do, but instead I kept quiet and suppressed all of my urges. It felt like someone had taken my soul out of my body. I was pretending like I was ok, but ran away from any discomfort that entered into my hemisphere. During this session with my life coach asked me "Lauren, what is it that you want to do most in the world?" and I said "**All I want to do is sing and dance in the street**". And she said "Why don't you do that?" I simply couldn't. I couldn't fathom that I could be in public and be my weird self. I had enough trouble being my weird self in private- not able to sing or dance alone in fears that the spirits around me, or even God, would judge me. My entire existence was based on fear of judgment from others.

It is March 2012, and I am sitting in a medicine circle in a stranger's living room. I have never participated in La Medicina, but she has been calling my name since I was a teenager. I have no idea what to expect. I drink the thick Peruvian brew, sweet and sticky and oddly familiar, and meditate. I have been doing intense self-exploration the past couple years: therapy (individual and group), meditation, reading, workshop after workshop and finally here in this Medicine Circle. I relax into her and feel her swirling around in my body. After some time, I realize that I have been transported deep into pure one-ness and connection: it feels like I have pulled back the skirt of the universe to look inside. I can physically see how I am connected with all things, all living beings, on this planet and others- I feel the deep pull of the universe. I feel like I have come back home. After some time, I go back into my physical body. I feel my teeth. I feel the warmth and wetness and smoothness of my tongue as I explore my mouth. I travel between my physical body and going into mass-oneness-consciousness for a while. Then, people around me start to sing. The group leader is teaching us songs and everyone is singing, except me. I can't sing. I want to so badly but I feel so much shame. And I think: how interesting, to go into oneness consciousness where all is love and connection, and then go back into my body and feel this intense shame around singing- the one thing I want to do the most. I hold back. I don't allow myself to explore. I feel the heavy guilt of not letting myself sing.

It is one month later, and I am sitting again in a medicine circle in a stranger's yurt. I am with my mother and 14 other women I don't know. It is a full moon in April. I drink the now-familiar Medicina and get transported back into one-ness consciousness. And then I start to receive downloads from The Mother saying "You MUST heal yourself through your throat. You have suppressed yourself through your throat for your entire life: from not speaking your truth to eating your feelings through food, and now you MUST heal yourself using your throat." I sat with her energy moving through my body for some time, receiving love from The Mother. Then a silence fell across the room, and She urged me to sing. To sing from my heart. I was so afraid. I didn't want to sing: what if people didn't like it? What if they told me to stop? What if it wasn't appropriate to sing? What if I annoyed people and ruined their experience? But the more I didn't allow myself to sing, the more my heart would pound, the more anxiety would build. And so I sang. I sang "Ali, Ali", an old Jewish song from my childhood. I let her sing through my heart. I let her pour from my soul and into the space. I had never allowed Her to move through me like that. After my song, the silence was all pervasive. I felt my soul soften, I felt the years of what it felt like holding myself back, and I cried like a child in my mother's lap while she cried as well. After the ceremony was over, many women talked to me about my song and how it impacted them on a deep and healing level. That was one of the most profound moments: knowing that my song could not only have such a strong healing impact on me, but on those around me.

It May 2012, and I am singing in front of a group of 40 people in a mental health institution in Oakland for Bread & Roses- a non-profit that brings "hope, healing, and joy through live music to institutionalized and isolated individuals". I am nervous and scared, but excited and as soon as I dive into the music She follows me. I see the audience brighten- their faces, earlier sad and cramped, open up to the music that surrounds them. They yell out songs they want to hear and interact with me and my musical partner, Japa. It felt so natural, to let myself be seen in front of a group of people, to let myself be heard, and to share my love in the best way I can: through music. From that point, I started volunteering on a regular basis with Bread & Roses. I sang in convalescent homes and drug rehab clinics. Everywhere I went I could share my love of music and healing with others, and while I was bring light and joy to others I was healing myself and my fears and my shame through my throat.

It is December 2013, and I am sitting in front of my computer at Bread & Roses where I was hired a year and a half ago, typing up this essay for my final Sound Healing project. Not only do I work for a non-profit that brings healing through music to others, but I lead my own sound circles and do private one-on-one voice coaching (ProcessSING!) that helps people explore their shadow in regards to self-expression. I am working on creating my first album of original songs- something I never thought I would do that is now coming to fruition. It is incredible to think about my past roots and how I have come so far in such a short amount of time. I owe it to one big thing: **allowing** myself to follow my intuition. In the past I would think of something I wanted to say or sing or do and be so petrified of the judgment of others and shame myself into staying small and quiet. The fear of judgment still comes sometimes, and I sit with her. She is my little girl inside that just wants to be loved and accepted. The funny thing, is the more I allow myself to do whatever I want, I feel that I am loved and accepted on a richer, deeper level. I owe this healing, in a large part, to music and sound. I have used music as a pathway for exploring myself- my light and my shadow- and not running away from the discomfort of shame and embarrassment that once held me in place. I feel my work in this world is to help others explore how they suppress their own intuitions and desires in fear of being judged, and the shame that follows when we know we are not on our path. I wish to help open the hearts of those around me by giving permission to allow the entire human experience to penetrate us in a deep and

profound level and not to push any discomfort out of our experience. And while I have done so much growth, I feel like I am truly just starting to take the first steps on this new life-long adventure.