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Melting and Concretizing

Midwifery student's thoughts from February in Da a Luz.

Text by Josefina Schiller

Slowly the cold is fading away as the days get longer and the almond flowers cover the trees and ground. It is still really hard to wash in the river, but the change of the weather is clear, so we

feel the spring is arriving in Andalucía. At the same time that the morning frost melts, our physical structures are getting solid: the Womb Temple, or school building, is finally ready to be inhabited! Many workers and volunteers helped finish the roof in the first two weeks of February, and we celebrated with a dance night inside of the womb, that looked like a carnival, full of glitter and funny costumes.



Just as the snow in the mountains becomes cold water in the Rio Guadelfeo, we also had melting issues in our first two weeks of February: Breastfeeding! Emily, amazing breastfeeding professional and counselor, came to talk to us all about this subject, which showed us how complex it is. It is normal to imagine that baby is born and breastfeeds straight away naturally. But actually it isn't so simple, and we must be aware as midwives or doulas about people's choice, information given, health issues for baby and mother, commercial and advertisement reactions. Most importantly, we must know how to support one's decision, giving the best we can in all these matters. These deeply important studies came with a lot of information for all of us students, who were feeling stiff in our bodies after these two weeks.



Blissfully, it was balanced by the following two, that came to melt us a little bit more... Alexa, a wonderful argentinian doula and yoga teacher, stayed for the last two weeks of February, giving us a Self Care module called "My body is a temple". Since the beginning we have been talking about how essential it is to have self-care inside the midwifery course, because is very easy to forget yourself when taking so much care of others, and also you can't really help anyone if you're not feeling well. Alexa had a beautiful approach that touched all of us, by moving our bodies with pregnancy yoga, connecting with our babies or projects. She also brought many meditation practices, massage, rituals, shamanic drums, singing in circle and connecting as a sisterhood.



As a group, we got even more together, sharing this lovely moment taking care of each other and of one self. Alexa's module was the first one realised inside the Temple, and that new dynamic changed how we feel in class, by creating a more focused environment, and giving us the responsibility to take care of this space too, because no one else will! We are the students and also the care-takers of our school space, and community, and homes. It's a lot, but that's how we learn, isn't it?



Another cool event happened in the Temple, to raise funds for the real finishing of the roof: the documentary "We, The Uncivilised – A life story" was projected by it's creators Peter and Lily. We watched the movie in a room full of people from all around the Alpujarras, discussed briefly and then had another dancing night. As the month ends, the rain -- the waters of March -- begins. As the brazilian song says "são as águas de março fechando o verão...". Apparently the same happens in the Alpujarras, but in this case closing the winter!



Getting to know our students – Raisa Rajaniemi

Raisa is our Finnish representative who came to Da-a-Luz searching for the approach she believes in as a midwife. While studying midwifery and nursing in Finland and Ireland for 4,5 years, Raisa found out about the alternative and holistic approach of midwives thorough the book *Spiritual Midwifery*. “When I randomly found this book in the university library, I thought: this is what I've been looking for, there are people who are doing it differently... Awesome!”



In hospitals she tried to connect with people that wanted natural birth and breastfeeding, but there was a big gap between her beliefs and what she saw happening in the system. It was difficult for her to combine what she loved in midwifery and the actual work at the hospital. It was in a very cold winter day in Finland when Raisa was feeling hopeless. She told her partner, Henry, that she felt very lost in that situation, and she didn't know what to do. Henry said he would help her find a better place, and with an internet search they discovered Da-a-Luz.

The idea of reconnecting with holistic approach of midwifery, combined with the possibility of living in a warm country like Spain, was so appealing, that they decided to come the following year. "My wish is to be an independent midwife at some stage, do doula work and learn about hypnobirth - that's my next step after here". Raisa also had experiences in many different medical environments when studying and working as a nurse, including surgical nursing, mental hospitals, nursing homes and care of dying people. Working with people who are at the final stage of their lives was a privilege for her, as it is with births. "Death or dying doesn't scare me. I see it as a natural part of the life cycle. For me it is a great privilege to help people leave this place in a nice and soft way, and in a respectful environment".



For Raïsa, the experience in Da-a-Luz is very empowering as she can see herself as a midwife in the way she always wanted to. "The amazing sisterhood and group of friends we have created here makes studying so much fun!" Also it is a great experience for her and her partner to live in a sunny country and pick oranges in their garden.

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