

My interview with the future

By Neyda H. Long

How grandma (Abuela) and granddaughter travelled toward her past unknown to Abuela.

My world was another world. I could not believe it. I could no recognize it. Only vestiges left by many people who passed through it. I only saw pieces of left-over things, that today, littered the streets.

I only found silence and loneliness.

I went to see her, always elegant, firm, with her intelligent glance always ready to express her thoughts. These sparkling green eyes flashing since her first day I saw her as a newborn. Always ready for life's challenges.

My visit was the first one since so many years...I did not know what happened after my departure.

The world was different after the first wave, where a silent disease that attacked friends and foes, young, old, busy people and idle people.

Hi! I said:

She talked to me like if it were yesterday that we talked; like if I never had left.

She sat down with a cup of hot drink near her garden.

I dared to say – Your garden is filled with roses which still have their springtime fragrance! She answered: yes, I still work with them, I feed them with natural products; now that the factories are closed. We do not have chemical fertilizers. The health authorities had said that the chemical products are dangerous because they weaken our immune system and could hamper our antigens on their fighting power against diverse virus.

Shyly I asked: What happened with your career's aspirations?

She answered: Before, they used to say that you do not have enough qualifications or experience for the job. But today, their excuse is that the project was delayed due to the pandemic. There are only void excuses. Therefore, you cannot develop what you wish.

The government says that there are subsidies for those who lose employment due to diverse pandemics periods. But if you haven't got an "official job" you do not qualify for the subsidy. However, this emergency subsidy cannot cover your biweekly basic bills.

We had more pandemics like you knew, some of them were fictitious other were "real" It does not matter whether they were fictitious or not; they produced the same consequences. Fear paralyzed people fear paralyzed factories, markets. Nobody dared to speak to each other for fear about what could happen.

I can tell you Abuela, I have good memories from my childhood and the early years of my youth.

I remember my summer vacations, the trips with Mama, the trips with Papa. We hardly rested, we never were alone. We had picnics, and we went to parks and restaurants.

My years at the university, were years that passed very fast for me, with a whirlwind of concerts, where we sang until our voices got coarse. I gathered with our cousins to talk until the next morning. After we had exams and papers to write. I did as papa, I procrastinated five hours before the final deadline to write my papers. We were too busy with our friends and songs.

After another pandemic appeared, people fell silent. At the universities we could not gather with our friends. The university administrators requested to the teaching staff to deliver on-line

courses and to record lectures. Then, the university used each semester the same recording to deliver their academic programs. The faculty could not complain to the union, because a clause, which acknowledged the author's intellectual property was included within the collective agreement, in which all recorded electronic academic material was university property. Then, the universities had "ready-made" academic programs that allowed them to deliver their diverse academic disciplines.

They kept telling us to eat natural produces from our gardens, because the food processing plants were closed.

I heard rumors that the real reasons why the factories were closed, were because workers began to demand better salaries; then, the owners considered that was economically feasible to close them rather than to be submitted to the union's workers dictatorship.

Many climate change events took place, like floods and dry spells cycles were the new normal. Cattle producers began to ask for more emergency help to cover their millionaire loses. The meat processing plants closed their doors for good because the "government veterinarians" reported that the cattle were contaminated with the "virus". They began an awareness campaign to inform the public that it was healthier to stop eating animal products, because, these products carried the "virus".

Public awareness campaigns reported that for the public health safety, it was better for people to cultivate their own vegetable gardens. They claimed that it was the only way to stop more pandemic cycles and the owners did not have to bow down to union demands. Then, they made up more pandemics with "lethal virus"; the government propaganda substituted the news casts. Now, the news casts' censoring was a world-wide norm. Their aim was to avoid panic among the population. The only real "virus" that was created was the virus of "hunger". Millions died as the result of the spread of this new "virus".

Today's pandemic does not have a vaccine, because this virus was designed to control people's fear of a future "wave".

Many years ago, Abuela, the old people died in institutions called long term care. The administration left them to die of starvation and after it was said that all deaths were product of another "wave".

In these long-term care homes food was scarce, and residents began to escalate a series of protests for the lack of basic care, nobody help them to bathe, nobody help them to walk and exercise. On the other side, workers kept demanding further increase of salaries. Then, the solution was to sedate residents and put them to sleep. This way the workers could no protest anymore due to lack of work.

I heard of protests from diverse religious groups because churches, synagogues, mosques and temples were ordered to be closed permanently to the public. Health officials claimed that they could not afford another "pandemic wave". People started to stage vigils in protest, and they gathered at night outside of buildings that once carried religious ceremonies. Police dispersed them because gathering of more that 10 people were forbidden. They were ordered to practice their faith in the privacy of their homes. However, I heard that people are gathering in secret and they are increasing in numbers and unusual events took place...

Today the youth are the only ones who survive. The situation became desperate for people over 60. Consequently, the assisted death law was expanded so everyone had access to it.

More people died for this artificial mean than from natural causes. Killing someone was not considered murder, as long as, the person had a white paper with their signatures on it, giving authorization to be helped to put an end to their lives.

Abuela, I have not seen you for a long time, I lost my communication with you. I lost your cell number and I could no text you. I often thought about you. I hope that you would be surviving writing your poems and your stories.

Abuela began to talk, she told me that she missed me, that she loved me very much. She did not know what happened to my younger sister. She spoke softly her voice seemed like a soft wind. She kept talking asking questions quietly.

I looked toward the horizon; snowflakes were fallen delicately toward the wide meadows.

There were no flowers just waiting for spring.

Suddenly, a soft whirlwind passed by the horizon. I kept looking at it. I turned my glance where I was talking with Abuela; only, I saw the white whirlwind softly twirling away like Abuela's hair.

But now, I was not sure if we really had spoke to each other....

Epilogue

I did not tell Abuela, what happened after these successive pandemic waves.

We had to learn a new way of life. We learned to understand that we are not alone in this universe.

Life flows and all of us are interconnected. Mother Nature taught us that we depend on her to be able to survive on this planet. This was a period of recovery; and the cycles of dry spells and floods disappeared.

I began to take care of my garden. I started to help others. I not only taught them to plant flowers, but also how to cultivate vegetables.

We learn to use natural resources without exploiting or misusing them.

We use the sun as a source of energy and to maintain humanity's cultural and scientific heritage. We found the way how to produce paper without killing trees.

I heard of a group, during the pandemic cycles, that tried to populate other planets. We did not know what happened to them. But I can tell you, Abuela, that our human seed is knitted in the fabric of the universe.

Now, our planet has healed, the ocean lost its acidity, the corals began to recover mammals and marine extinct species began to re-populate the planet. A large variety of extinctic species of trees, flowers began to increase in numbers.

I can tell you Abuela, that I was, and I am, the promoter of this harmony between us and nature. We had to unify our efforts to build a new era for humanity. I only saw its beginnings.

My hair became as white as yours. My grand children will take the torch of life...one more time...

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