

Ada: *¡Hola, hola!* You're listening to Se Ve Se Escucha (Seen and Heard), a language justice podcast for healers, cultural workers, medicine makers, and stewards of the land. Se Ve Se Escucha is a project of the Center for Participatory Change. I am Ada Volkmer, and today I'm joined by language justice interpreter and plant mommy, Nayra Adriana Pacheco Guzmán, and LJ organizer and folk healer, Sarah Nuñez. Welcome to the podcast!

Sarah: Hey Ada!

Nayra: *¡Hola, hola! ¿Quiubo?*

Sarah: *¡Hola!*

Ada: I am very excited to have both of you here. This is the last episode of our third season, and we are ending it kind of with... with light, with some hope, uhm, and with some offerings and tools for our listeners and for everyone out there. So, we're going to start with introductions, I don't know, Sarah, Nayra, who wants to go first, if you will introduce yourselves.

Nayra: Hi everybody, thank you Ada, thank you Se Ve Se Escucha team for having me. My name is Nayra Adriana Pacheco Guzmán, my pronoun is she and *ella en español*, and I am calling in from Los Angeles, CA. I... raised in Central Coast of California, mainly Santa Barbara, and originally from Oaxaca, México. So... happy to be checking in here from Tongva territory.

Ada: Gracias Nayra.

Sarah: Yes, yes! So happy to be here too. Hey y'all, I'm Sarah Nuñez, calling from Louisville, KY. I was born in Bogotá, Colombia, raised in North Carolina, spent most of my adult life in North Carolina, and um, have known Ada now for what feels, like, half my life. So excited to be here and in community with you all, thank you.

Ada: Thank you both for being here. I'm really excited that we have, like, um, you know, representation—West Coast and East Coast representation as we talk about *plantitas*, and herbs, and herb medicine. So I think that's going to be... I like that there's, like, wherever you are, there's going to be something for you. Uhm, so I want to ask you all how, uhm... we're going to be talking about, like, herbs, herbal medicine, plant support... so I want to ask you all, how did this come into your life, how did *plantitas* and *hierbitas* come into your life?

Sarah: Yeah, so, you know, I think my—one of my first memories was when I was a child, uh, making, you know, when you sit in the grass and the clovers have, uh, flowers, and they're red, and they're white... so I would take those flowers and make them into—tie them, really, you know, well... the best I could without breaking the stems off, uh, and tie them and make a crown for my hair. And so as, you know, just playing as a child. And so... little did I know back then how medicinal clovers are, uh, but was probably my first memory of playing and enjoying... right, like, nature's medicine and plant medicine, but without even, like, really knowing what was happening. And so I think into my teens I played a lot more with herbs, but more from this, like, learning about them as a way because I had so much trauma and so much healing to do... from childhood and from life that, like, herbs just—herbs and plants, right, like... So growing in my garden and then making stuff at home and then sharing it with my friends and watching it, like, transform my life and transform my friends' lives was, uh... just really inspiring, and also, uhm,

just started to make such a huge difference. And then, you know, started learning from different teachers, you know, spent a lot of time going to the Southeastern Women's Herbal Conference hosted in, uhm, Western North Carolina and just, like, my friends would, like, share with me "Oh, I have a cold!" right, like, "Aw, take some licorice or mullein! Or, right, drink this tea, and, hey, I've grown it! And can you—here's what it looks like when it's growing!" and I'd be, like, "Wow!" and so just constantly learning, uh, from, you know, friends, and then teachers and elders, and so then just, you know, takes me into my, like, 30s and 40s where I just started a deeper dive and I think now after, you know, the racial uprisings and the—and the, uhm, and covid, and being in quarantine, uhm, and starting this herb collective called the Aflorar Herb Collective, I'm really in this state of driving a lot deeper into the practices and, uhm, into my own recipes and, uh, offering those out to community in a more public way (Ada: yeah), where I think most of it has always been real private, just kind of between me and my family and friends and loved ones (Ada: yeah), but definitely it's just, like, sort of spreading the wings, and becoming more open to... one, growing and learning, teaching others... and then also, like, providing recipes and things out to communities.

Ada: ¿Y *Nayra*?

Nayra: Yeah, I think my connection to working with plants, uh, is also rooted in—in my childhood. Uh... you know, I recall growing up in... *en México*, and one of my favorite things to do coming home from school, you know, was just, like, running to my backyard, to my *patio* and just, like, saying hi to all the other chickens, and the roosters, and the *cotorro* that always said bad words, and, uhm... just running to, like, the back of the of the patio, where one of my uncles would always be just chilling in the hammock (Ada laughs) and, you know, the posted, and I would love to just get my hands in the dirt and make my famous *tacos de lodo* and, you know, just grabbing some leaves and then, you know, putting some *lodo* in there... and to me, it was very reminiscent of, uhm, black beans, which we make a lot of in Oaxaca. Uhm, and then coming over here to the US and growing up with my dad, uhm, he always held that practice of smudging and taught me about, uh, clearing energy and... in as best ways as he could as well, not having a deep-deep knowledge, but still understanding that that was important. Uhm... And I think that once I grew a little bit older, I was actually connected and introduced into community garden out here in Los Angeles and Gardena by a... local middle school janitor, who had volunteered so much of his life to build up a community garden for the students to do volunteer hours... a lot of students were, you know, coming in from maybe probate—doing probation hours and needed that space, uhm, and it was this Black man who had come from the South and who had made it a point to... to build community out of this garden. And that was the first time that I was introduced into just this concept of growing your own food uhm, and the... the beauty of... being able to nourish yourself with your own hands, and then he was also the first person to help put me in a classroom with young people and just, you know, he just said "Do what you do," and I, you know, I said "I'm not—I don't—I don't have any training, I'm not a teacher," and he's, like, "Yes, but just do what comes naturally for you, you know, you got this." And so that both started my interest in doing youth work and, uhm, doing work with the land, and eventually I was able to take that back to Santa Barbara in a—in a personal way, uhm, in that I started a practice of just always planting something, whether it was... You know, herbs tend to be a lot more accessible to plant, but eventually I had my own space where I could grow out a hu—you know, fairly good-sized

garden and grow all of the *milpas*, and the kale, and the tomatoes, and the *chiles*, and, uhm... and it's also just become a way to ground myself when I haven't had stable home situations or stable living situations. To just be able to always plant something, or to always see something grow and find stability in that has been really important for me, and an important reminder that plants are also... can also be your companions, right, can also walk with you (Ada: mh-hm) and then through that, I... have also been connected through some community garden projects in Santa Barbara, so shout-out to El Centro, Santa Barbara, in which we finally got our Somos Semillas project up and running this year, uhm... so important because of the pandemic.

Ada: I was thinking about how... about interpretation, and how so much is happening in interpretation, and especially during these times. We are interpreting from home, we are navigating and trying to survive a pandemic that we're trying to understand, we are learning new tech, uhm, we are fighting for justice in our communities, many of us are parenting, you know, so this is all happening while we interpret. Uhm, we're also.. uhm, interpreting—so there's, like, 3 levels ¿no? Like, we're interpreting the stories of others while we're actually interpreting. Uhm, then I think that we have our own stories, our own traumas, our own stories of migration or immigration, our own ways that we learned or unlearned a language. And then I think about how we also have our ancestors' stories, and their stories of surviving colonialism, or surviving—guh, you know, or colonizing others, to be honest. Uh, there are stories of surviving slavery, or of having enslaved others... and we have their resilience and their trauma. So I think about all of this is happening in interpreting, and that's why I need support. That's why I need to burn *copal* ahead of time. That's why I need to have the rose quartz right here, close by so I can grab it and put it in my heart when I think I'm about to bust out crying in the middle of an interpretation gig (chuckles). That's why I need the spray, that's why I need the tea, and that's why after I interpret I go outside and I try to connect with some other senses, I try to shake it out, because I need the support, I cannot do this work, I cannot continue to be a language justice worker, uhm, without support. I wanted to ask you, Nayra, I know that you incorporate, like, plants and herbs as part of your LJ work, so if you would tell us a little bit about that?

Nayra: I think the best gift that this intersection of movements has given me is just, like, being able to access the community that I feel, like, I've always needed, because I... I think when I'm able to connect language justice work and land sovereignty work that is—that is what I found, at least in this point in my life, where I feel most at home. Because I'm able to connect uhm, my immigration experience (Ada: hmmm) and the roots, and the wisdom, and the experiences that I carry from the homeland, uh, but I'm also able to connect that with everything that I've learned, you know, while growing up here in the US and I'm able to build a new community that... that I've always needed, you know, and I think that that's so important about both of these, uhm... spaces, both with language workers and with land work, like, there is no... there is no working in silos, like, you're just not gonna make it if you (Ada: yeah, yeah) don't learn how to work collectively, and it's a very beautiful... kind of humbling yourself, because it's I think, uhm... a very beautiful practice of love.

Ada: And I guess, Sarah, that that made me think that, uhm... right now with Aflorar Herbal Collective, uhm, how part of your work is, like, passing that on, so I guess now is a great time to ask you about Aflorar.

Sara: Yes! Nayra, you so inspired me it's, like, so beautiful. It's, like, you know, we, you know, yes, so it's in community, right? I think that we, like, understanding that what we do in the healing that we need and that we're going to go through is not ha—does not have to be alone and isolated, right? And so, like, we can buy herbs, right, all day long, from all the different companies, and they come dried and, you know, ready, and you basically, like, put him in jars and make sure that they are preserved, right, and then, like, make your—make your things, right, make your teas, make your tinctures, but, like, I'd much rather us get the herbs that are growing here on our land, that are in abundance, that we can wild craft, uh, here or in, right, the Southwest or California, like, wherever our people are that can get us the goods, and then process it in community. So it's not so much, like, oh great, like, this I think our capitalist mindset or, like, our way of, like, we get it and we just ingest it and it's, like, no, wait, like, it's a process. And the process along the way as we do it in community together, actually when—and then when we gift out the packets of whatever we've done, it's all been made in community. Rarely am I here just, like, making my stuff on my own, like, it's always done with people. Then we're able to, like, gift out that love and that care that's done with.

Ada: Will you tell us about some other places where you've gifted it out? 'Cause I think that's a really... yeah, so where has Aflorar, like, share its gifts?

Sarah: Yes! We started doing it—we first started with seeds: plant seeds, herbal plant seeds, and got them, uhm, distributed, uhm, a few hundred seeds to different people across the country. And then then we pivoted pretty quickly after the racial uprisings and in Louisville, KY, uhm, with, you know, the state violence and the killing of Breonna Taylor and the lack of justice that, you know, we've been fighting for for over six months here in Louisville, and we started making herbal care kits. And so... teas, bath salts, breath steams, and getting those out, uhm, to folks that are, you know, caretakers, protesters, organizers... and then we've done some work with... with, you know, the language justice workers got some kits sent out (Ada: uh-huh) to folks across the country and Puerto Rico, uh, and then have also partnered with Tracc4Movements to do some work locally and nationally as they expand their work, uh, to provide trauma support, herbal healing circles on the ground in different—in different communities. But we've given out about 500 kits since the beginning of the summer.

Ada: Sarah had this great idea of you all bringing some recipes for our listeners, and so I wanted to ask you all... when you thought about the Se Ve Se Escucha listeners, or when you thought about, like, the language justice workers/crews, like, what gifts, what recipes, what medicine do you want to offer us?

Nayra: I wanted to... just share, uh... a blend of herbs that I use when I need to decompress, care for myself, nurture... and it's a blend of calendula, yarrow, and lavender. Uhm, the lavender I think most of us, you know, can easily access and know and recognize it as an herb that really helps us relax, uhm, really helps us unwind... And so, for me, I also ... pre-pandemic, uh, also practiced, uhm, going to sweat lodges out in Ventura and Chumash cland. And I remember, uh, the mentor Ana Becerra, the *mujer* who pours the sweat lodges would always, uh, after the *copal*, she would always, you know, throw in some lavender seeds and just say “Let me add some sweetness to your life.” (Ada: hmmm) So I just want to honor that whenever I think about lavender I think about her and all of the ways she reminds me to add sweetness in my life, you know, when

things get rough. Especially in the sweat lodge, where you're sweating, sweating, you know. Uhm, and then after that is some yarrow, which really helps with just calming the nerves, uhm, addressing just any issues of depression and anxiety. For me, yarrow has been a really good companion and, actually, in my transition over here to LA, I was gifted a yarrow plant, uhm, that I've been able to access, and use, and just share space with. So again plantitas as companions too, uhm, and then finally calendula, which is a really good support for your immune system, for your lymph nodes, and I wanted to also put that as an offering, being that it's a... it's a *pariente* of the *cempasúchil* that we use for our *día de los muertos ofrendas* in this season. So for me this is, like, a really sweet, uh, fall blend that just kind of helps me fall into these vibes of just warming and nourishing myself.

Ada: Awesome. Sarah?

Sarah: Yes! In the same vein of the fall and the changing temperatures, I came up with this Se Ve Se Escucha té (all laugh) for you all, so... So, the first ingredient is and, you know, I think we're on to something here, like, you know, we're going to have the Se Ve Se Escucha té blend for every season, right (Ada laughs). So the first ingredient is ginger, and ginger really helps to warm the body. This is great for, you know, we're sitting behind these screens, these—you know, you've interpreted for several hours you're, like, your brain is, like, going through, you know, hyper kind of, like, your eyes are moving fast so, you know, this is a great blend for your throat and for your belly and to just warm you up. And then I... so I take about 10 *pedacitos* and throw it in the hot water, and then I, like, the juice of an orange, uh, half an orange or a whole orange, this is really lightening and brightening and awakening, helps bring in the vitamin C, and just, like, gets you, you know, uh... And can shift energy as you're, like, sitting in these spaces for hours. Uh, and then honey, which is super soothing, also great for allergies, good for your throat after you've been talking for a long time... and this is actually honey that's been infused with chamomile and lavender so that also adds this real, like, calming soothing effect. Uh, but just use, you know, any kind of honey you have, but if you do have the time to just soak some honey and herbs, it's a great addition to any tea. And so, that's my Se Ve Se Escucha té.

Ada: That's awesome, thank you so much, that's so sweet. So, I was also thinking, as an interpreter, kind of some of the things that I have to deal with and I wanted to ask you, like, for certain things, and then you tell me, like, which herb, which *remedio*, like, comes to mind. So the first thing I wanted to ask you all was about sleep, because I think for me, sleep is such an important component to be able to provide good interpretation the next day, so who's your, like, go-to-sleep companion *remedio*?

Sarah: Yes, skullcap, that's the sleep herb. Uh, it is part of the mint family, you can use it during the day for balance if you are, like, overworking, but then at night it'll just put you right to sleep. You take a tea or a tincture.

Nayra: I use lemon balm, that isn't something... a *plantita* that was introduced to me just maybe in the last year and a half or so and shout out to my *prima* for that, uhm... yeah, and lemon balm is just really soothing, it helps calm me... I wake up the next morning and my skin feels happy, so that means I got good rest... yeah.

Ada: What about focus, what would you all recommend for focus?

Nayra: I wanna is—bring in—peppermint! And I actually... woke up a little late today (Ada laughs) and what I did is I rubbed some peppermint oil on my wrist, because that is a... a smell, you don't even have to take it in as tea, but you can, that just wakes me up, brings me into the present moment, and yeah, really helps me focus in and really lightens all my senses.

Sarah: I'm feeling really attracted to grounding, so anything that helps me to ground, then helps me to focus, right? And so definitely, like, some kind of, like, grounding meditation (Ada: hmmm). But I'm feeling, like, super, like, green, like, wintergreen. Or, you know, or the pine or the cedar, right, which is in a smudge or you can use in oils.

Ada: What about, uhm... memory? Do you have anything that you recommend for memory?

Nayra: Uh, *romero*, rosemary. Just smelling that when you're studying, maybe the night before if you're studying those terms, vocabulary, whatever it is that you're doing to prep, smelling that while you're doing—while you're studying, and then again having it on hand during your assignment, that just kind of—reall—what kind of—bringing in that connection to your brain, right, through the sense of smell will help you with memory.

Sarah: Yeah, and I would just add eucalyptus. You could even mix the eucalyptus and the rosemary together.

Ada: What about, like, decompressing, letting go, kind of, like, *soltando* just kind of, like, putting that energy out of you. What... what herbs, what things would you recommend for that kind of, like, decompressing?

Sarah: I would say smoke. So, anything that you can get to smoke, uhm, not necessarily inhale smoke, but the smoke and the cleansing that the smoke itself does, so if you can get the cedar, or the pine, or sage, or palo santo, if you have those. If you don't have those you can wildcraft—probably where you live creosote, right, and create bundles. You can smoke lavender... and so I think that... yeah, that both the smell of the herb but then also the smoke and the cleansing—of the space and of yourself.

Ada: (Overlapping) Mh-hmm, yeah. Nayra, is there anything else that comes to mind for you?

Nayra: I agree with... with definitely the smoke. I also want to bring into the space, uh, basil, just any kind of basil, and whether you take it as tea... It's also, you know, a holy basil, purple basil, is something that is used a lot in *limpias*, you know, uhm... and so it has those cleansing properties, right, to take away those energies that we no longer need. So any ways that we can use basil, whether it's in a tea, whether it is, you know, uh, rubbing ourselves down with fresh basil, uhm, I think the scent is very potent but also very loving as well, so that's a good decompressant for me.

Ada: And Nayra, you talked about food, so I don't know if there's, like, a food that you kind of, like, recommend, uh, for interpreters or for language workers, like, 'cause I think that's a really interesting part of it too, like, you're not just, like, the teas, but also, like, the food that we're eating. So is there any, like, tricks that you have there?

Nayra: Yeeeeeah, well, oh, I can—I—there's a lot that I think I've been learning especially in, uh, in this year, in 2020, uhm, but I think the most basic concept that I'd, like, to offer folks is... One, just

find out what your ancestors ate, like, what those traditional foods are, and try to tap into some of what, you know, those super foods—those quote unquote “super foods” that that we call now, that they really do, yeah, come packed with a lot of what we need to give us energy. And so, for me right now, I love, uhm, working with *nopales*, cactus leaves, uhm, and I make those in smoothies, uhm, and that's a really good way I found for myself that when I eat too early in the morning I'm having my stomach focus on digesting versus, uh, kind of having my body focus its energy there versus mentally what—in the task that I need to do. So I do also just practice kind of starting with light foods in the beginning of the day and then closing up with something heavier, and so, you know, putting *nopales* into a smoothie or having a *nopalito* salad, anything like that is... is really nice for my stomach but also for my energy. And it's... it's a really good way to also just hydrate, and I think that's my other (Ada, overlapping: hmmm) like, how can we use our *plantitas* or, you know, infusing our waters with herbs, but just how do we—how do we use the food that we eat to also stay hydrated. So, you know, the cucumbers, the *fresas*, anything that already contains water is gonna, you know, nourish us in both of those ways.

I just wanna add one piece that um, you know, as language workers, I do believe that... that land work is an inherent connection to language, because language teaches us so much about how we connect to the world around us. And... when we do language work, that helps us affirm and preserve and elevate a lot of the languages and traditions that teach us of different ways to relate to the land, then I think that that's also really important uhm, healing collective journey. So I also just want to, uhm, acknowledge all of the ancestral wisdom that lies in indigenous languages, you know, was that, uh... I have the opportunity to work with a lot of communities and *pueblos originarios* from Oaxaca, uh, primarily the Mixteco or Ñuu sávi people, who are people of the rain, and Zapoteco people, the Binni zaa people, who are people of the clouds... and I think just inherently, we... what drives me the most in language justice and land work is land sovereignty and, just, autonomy, collective autonomy, and I find that intersection so beautifully in that space, so... I just want to honor that, that a lot of the work—whether we're working with indigenous languages or not, but by being language workers with a language justice focus we, uh... we are able to bridge that space in which we can connect people back to, I think, something much deeper and very ancestral.

Ada: (Sighs) *Ay compas*, thank you so much. Thank you for your gifts, thank you for your offerings, thank you for your wisdom, thank you for sharing your *plantita* friends with us... I really, really, really appreciate it, thank you!

Sarah: Thanks for having us.

Nayra: Thank you for the space.

Ada: Thank you so much to Nayra and Sarah. I'm Ada Volkmer of the Center for Participatory Change. Like we said, this is the last episode of season three, so I wanna take this opportunity to say *gracias* to a couple of folks. Thank you CPC for making a third season of the podcast possible, thank you Dhruv for all the last minute copyediting, thank you to *mi changuito*, *mi viejo*, Michael for putting up with making a podcast at home and all the advice, checking my English, checking the editing, all the things... Of course, *infinitas gracias* to our editor Manuel... We have recorded and produced this whole season *desde cuarentena* from our houses, over thousands of WhatsApp messages and a lot of GIFs, so *muchas gracias, primo*. *Ya saben*, please make sure to

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